



BC Achievement Indigenous Business Award



NOMINATION GUIDE & TIPS

I always say, ‘rather than complain about it, what are you going to do about it, what can you do to change it’. If there’s a plan that needs to be developed, then do it. If there’s a capital investment that’s needed and if it’s viable, then do it. If it’s a business opportunity that’s worth building on and doing it, then do it. Just do it...take the risk., because now you’re paving the path for others to follow.

Photo & Quote: 2024 Award of Distinction Recipient, Robert J. Dennis Sr. (Emchayik)

This Nomination Guide includes important information that should be carefully reviewed before submitting a nomination and tips on how to present a compelling nomination.

AWARD PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Indigenous Business Award (IBA) program is Indigenous-led and aims to honour excellence while focusing on the successes of Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs. The program offers awardees and their supporters an authentic space to showcase their achievements and build bridges between BC’s Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies.

WHY NOMINATE OR APPLY

The IBA program serves: to identify and recognize successful Indigenous businesses; to honour and celebrate Indigenous business achievements; and to support and sustain Indigenous entrepreneurship.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- **February 15, 2026** – Deadline to submit for the 2026 award program
- **Summer** – Awardees Announced
- **Fall** – Gala Dinner & Presentation Ceremony

The completed nomination form and all materials must be submitted by **February 15, 2026 @ 11:59 p.m.** for the nomination to be considered for the **2026 award program**.

SAVE AND CONTINUE LATER

- If you don’t have all the information on hand, click on the **‘Save and Continue Later’** button at the bottom of the online nomination form
- You will be prompted to **enter your email and will receive a link** that you can access and complete your nomination prior to the deadline

CHECKLIST - BEFORE YOU START

- Review the **Nomination Guide** (this document) with tips for submitting a compelling nomination
- Ensure the nominator and nominee meet the eligibility criteria
- Prepare the Nominator Statement, Community Impact & Ownership Structure statements **in a word document**, then copy and paste the content into the required field
- Have all nominator and nominee contact information
- Have all documents ready to upload
- Schedule 15-20 minutes to complete the form

CATEGORIES

Individuals and businesses may enter in ONE category only.

Young Entrepreneur of the Year:

This award recognizes success by a young entrepreneur in the operation of an existing business. Nominees must be aged 35 years and under by **February 15, 2026**, have been in business for at least two years, and the business must be at least 51% Indigenous owned and operated (First Nations, Métis or Inuit).

Business of the Year (the business must be at least 51% Indigenous-owned and operated):

These awards recognize the outstanding achievements of Indigenous entrepreneurs in three sub-categories:

- Businesses with 1-2 employees
- Businesses with 3-10 employees
- Businesses with 11+ employees

Community-Owned Business of the Year (businesses must be 100% owned by the community):

This award acknowledges one or more businesses owned by a community with the intention of building a strong economic foundation for community members. There are two sub-categories for this award:

- Community-Owned one entity
- Community-Owned two more entities

Business Partnership of the Year (Indigenous ownership must be at least 50%):

This award recognizes a business partnership created by two or more parties.

Award of Distinction:

The Award of Distinction for lifetime achievement is presented to a person who, over her or his career, has made a significant difference in the Indigenous business community through her or his entrepreneurial endeavours and, in doing so, serves as a leader, role model, mentor and inspiration. The individual may be an innovator in her or his business activities, a successful entrepreneur, or an individual who has been instrumental in supporting or creating Indigenous business activities in the province.

*Visit BC Achievement's website to learn more about past Award of Distinction recipients.

NOMINATOR ELIGIBILITY

Any person, group or organization may submit nominations for the award with exceptions noted below:

- Current members of the jury panel, or members of the jury panel's immediate family may not submit a nomination
- BC Achievement board members may not submit a nomination
- Family members (e.g., parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, cousins) may not submit a nomination

NOMINEE ELIGIBILITY

An eligible nominee must be a business that:

- Is at least 51% Indigenous owned and operated (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)
- Is based in British Columbia
- Has been in operation for a minimum of two years

A business may self-nominate (i.e., apply for the award program).

The following are ineligible to receive the Award:

- Government agencies and institutions
- Businesses operated or owned by BC Achievement board members
- Businesses operated or owned by a member of the jury panel
- Posthumous nominations
- Recent past award recipients*

***Past award recipients must wait five years before reapplying unless the nature of the business has significantly changed.**

Award of Distinction Nominees - the following individuals are ineligible to receive the Award of Distinction:

- A current BC Achievement board member
- A current member of the IBA jury panel
- Posthumous nominations

An individual may not self-nominate for the Award of Distinction category.

***Visit BC Achievement's [Awardees webpage](#) to see if your nominee is a past recipient of the award.**

HOW TO NOMINATE / APPLY

The nominator must complete the online Nomination form and include the following:

- Nominator Name & Contact Information (if applicable)
- Nominee Name & Contact Information
- Nominee Category
- Nominee Short Description (20 words max.)
- Nominee Indigenous Identity*
- Nominator Statement
- Ownership Structure Statement
- Community Impact Statement

- Number of full- &/or part-time permanent employees (Indigenous & non-Indigenous)
- Financials – optional, but strongly recommended
- Support Letter (written by someone other than the nominator)
- Additional Materials – optional, but strongly recommended (up to 5 items max.)

***Nominee Indigenous Identity**

At BC Achievement, we see the nomination process as a collaboration and the beginning of a strong meaningful relationship. The nomination must clearly articulate the nominee’s relationship and connection to their Indigenous identity.

For the purposes of the IBA program, Indigenous in the context of the First Peoples in Canada includes:

- First Nations: are status and non-status individuals who are citizens, recognized members, or direct blood relatives of a larger tribal group
- Inuit: are the First Peoples of the Arctic regions of Canada
- Métis: have a direct line of Métis ancestry to a known Métis settlement, community, or family group

Supporting Documentation

Regarding Indigenous identity and to protect the integrity of the award, please provide supporting documentation from those who are self-identifying and disclosing their Nation affiliation. If jury members have questions, BC Achievement will follow up. Some examples for documentation include the following:

- A copy of their Status card
- A letter of support from their community speaking to their connection
- A letter from the nominee outlining their connection to their community

Note: Indigenous-Industry Partnerships must provide an additional statement that fully outlines the role of the Indigenous partner

TIPS FOR SUBMITTING A COMPELLING NOMINATION

Nominator Statement Max. 3000 characters including spaces or approx. 500 words.

We encourage you to make use of the full word count for the nominator statement to provide a well-rounded and engaging description of the nominee’s achievements.

- Describe the business’ mission, vision and goals
- Include background information about the nominee / business
- Explain why the nominee started the business and how it has grown in size and scope since its inception
- Indicate if the nominee has an Indigenous employment strategy
- Address what inspires the nominee
- Provide any additional reasons why the nominee should be considered for the award

Jury members value learning about the nominee’s story of resilience and how Indigenous values have been helpful. The writer is encouraged to provide statistical data or historical context, if applicable; and list or outline future plans.

Ownership Structure Statement Max. 1250 characters or approx. 250 words.

- Provide information on the structure of the business including the name and position of the individual who owns and manages the business

Community Impact Statement Max. 2000 characters including spaces or approx. 350 words.

We encourage you to make use of the full word count for the nominator statement to provide a thorough and compelling description of the nominee's achievements.

- Describe the nominee's impact on their community (i.e., how has the nominee contributed to the economic well-being of its community?)
- Explain how the nominee has influenced job creation, training, mentorship, leadership, net gains for the environment, cultural revitalization, and other social benefits
- Provide examples of how the nominee has demonstrated excellence in leadership both in their business practice and involvement in the community
- Address the business' viability (i.e., does it demonstrate economic development, sustained business growth and options for the future?)

OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

- **Tell the nominee's story** as you would to a stranger and create a unique picture of the nominee
- Solicit information from others to strengthen the nomination
- Use specific and concrete examples to illustrate how the nominee meets the award criteria – don't just say your nominee (the business) is outstanding
- Keep explanations clear and to the point while ensuring there is enough information for the jury to make their decision

Support Letters Max. 2500 characters including spaces or approx. 450 words

Provide one business support letter from **someone other than the nominator** which speaks to the nominee's practices and impact. Support letters should:

- Be written on letterhead, signed by the writer and addressed to the 'Jury Panel'
- Come from outside the nominee's immediate family
- Help to paint a complete picture of the nominee and what they have accomplished.
- Describe why the nominee should be considered for the award and not simply state that an individual 'supports' the nomination
- Be written by individuals who know the nominee well enough to be able to talk about the nominee from first-hand experience (e.g., past award recipients, or other well-known people in a similar field to the nominee)
- Be current and written **specifically for the IBA award program**

Request support letters early on so the referee has time to write a strong letter.

Support letters are more powerful when they come from someone outside of the nominated group or organization.

Strong nominations use descriptive words such as: leader, innovator, trailblazer, mentor, supporter, advocate, visionary, changemaker; perseverance, commitment, dedication, recognition, determination; exemplary, admired, motivated, passionate, inspirational, extraordinary, committed, dedicated, resourceful, tireless, etc.

Financials Statement – optional, but strongly recommended

To help identify trends, nominators are encouraged to provide **nominee's revenue, expenses, and net profit** for the past two years.

This information allows the jury to assess community impact, sustainability, innovation, and leadership within a quadruple bottom-line framework, measuring the business's influence on people, the planet, profit, and purpose.

- Revenue: all earnings / money coming into the business
- Expenses: costs related to the business
- Net Profit: funds remaining after accounting for all costs, taxes and operating expenses (revenue minus expenses = net profit)

***Download the [IBA Financials form](#). Upload the completed Financials form to the field provided in the online nomination form.**

Additional Materials – optional, but strongly recommended

- Include materials such as the nominee’s biography, other letters of support, links* to articles, recorded testimonials, YouTube videos, photos, website links, etc.
- A maximum of five items will be accepted
- Jury members will review up to 10 pages total and five minutes of video

***Each link submitted is considered one additional material.**

UPDATING A NOMINATION

To update a nomination:

- Click on the link for the nomination form
- Select ‘yes’ to the question ‘Is this an update to a previous nomination?’
- Include the year the nomination was **first submitted**
- Complete the online nomination form and include updated information & materials about your nominee

Nominations are valid for three years including the first year of nomination and two subsequent years.

Nominators are **strongly encouraged to update their nomination** for consideration by the following year's jury panel if their nominee was not recognized in the previous year’s awardee cohort.

We are happy to send the documents previously submitted for your nominee. Please email indigenousbusiness@bcachievement.com to make your request.

SELECTION OF AWARDEES

An independent jury panel representing Indigenous business expertise throughout BC elevates nominations based on the documentation provided. The jury selects one recipient in each category. The decision of the jury is final. Nominees are notified only if selected for an award. Nominators are informed as to whether or not they have been successful with their application.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Award recipients are selected based on the material submitted by the nominator and the criteria of:

- Leadership
- Community Impact
- Innovation
- Sustainability

RECOGNITION

IBA recipients receive a cash prize bursary and are featured in a recognition film produced by BC Achievement. In addition, they receive a medallion and lapel pin designed by renowned artist Robert Davidson, OC, OBC.

Recipients are granted use of the Indigenous Business Award seal to signify their entrepreneurial excellence.

A gala dinner is held to celebrate the achievements of the awardees in Vancouver.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can information be saved on the nomination form and completed at a later date?

Yes. If you don't have all the information on hand, click on the 'Save and Continue Later' button at the bottom of the online nomination form – you will be prompted to enter your email and will receive a link that you can access and complete your nomination prior to the deadline.

2. What is the definition of a business?

A business is defined as an occupation or trade and the purchase and sale of products or services to make a profit. In a business, people work to make and sell products or services; other people buy the products and services.

3. What is the definition of a business partnership?

A business partnership is an entity formed between two or more businesses to undertake economic activity together. The businesses agree to create a new entity by contributing equity, and they then share in the revenues, expenses and control of the enterprise.

4. Does a certain percentage of a business have to be Indigenous-owned?

Yes, Community-owned businesses must be 100% owned by the community. Other businesses must be at least 51% Indigenous-owned and operated. Business partnerships in which the second partner is non-Indigenous must be at least 50% Indigenous-owned.

5. If I am 35 years old, can I only enter the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award category?

Nominees must be 35 years of age or under by the nomination deadline to be eligible for the Young Entrepreneur category. Entrepreneurs are free to apply to business category as long as the business has been operational for a minimum of two years, but they cannot submit a nomination for both the Young Entrepreneur category *and* Business of the Year category. Nominees can only be nominated for ONE category.

6. Should occasional, part-time and full-time employees be counted separately?

Please identify full or part-time permanent staff *only*. If there are instances that the business increases the number of employees for short periods of time this can be included in the description of your business activities but should not be included in total employee numbers.

7. If a business is 100% owned by the community, can it be nominated under the Business of the Year Category?

No, a wholly owned community enterprise must be nominated under the Community-Owned Business Category.

8. Is a nomination considered for more than one year?

Yes. Submitted nominations begin a three-year program, during which time the information can be reviewed by up to three juries. Nominators are given the opportunity to update their nomination each year prior to review by the independent jury panel.

9. Does the business have to be registered?

No, but the business must provide goods and/or services to consumers.

10. When are awardees notified and where are the names published?

Awardees are notified in late summer (date TBD). Their names are published on BC Achievement's website and social media channels and shared via press release in September.

PRIVACY POLICY

BC Achievement is committed to protecting the privacy of people through responsible management of information received. Nominations are kept confidential between the nominator and BC Achievement. Photographs and information about the award recipients may be used for the promotion of the IBA program and other promotional activities (i.e., on BC Achievement's website, social media channels, in media releases etc.).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the BC Achievement website to view the Indigenous Business Award program page or contact us at: indigenousbusiness@bcachievement.com