2025 IBA Awardee Backgrounders

Young Entrepreneur of the Year:
4 Generations Creations
Kamloops

Founded by Secwepemc artist and entrepreneur Ashley Michel in 2013, 4 Generations Creations is an Indigenous-owned business based in Kamloops, BC. Offering in-store and online shopping with shipping across Canada and the U.S., Ashley also travels to powwows and events nationwide. In November 2023, she opened a storefront that now supports over 40 Indigenous artists.

The business features ribbon skirt kits, fabrics, beading supplies, apparel, and accessories—each celebrating and promoting Indigenous culture and identity. A self-taught seamstress, Ashley launched the company to provide her daughter with authentic Indigenous representation and to create designs that educate and empower.

Rooted in the teachings of her matriarchs, 4 Generations Creations is a tribute to their skills, values, and spirit. Every handcrafted item—from beadwork to textiles—is made with intention and cultural respect. Blending tradition and contemporary design, the business honours the past while nurturing the next generation.

Business of the Year – one-to-two person enterprise:
Touch of Culture
West Vancouver

Touch of Culture is an Indigenous-owned creative fashion business founded by Pam Baker (Himikalas/Sewid-duuk), a proud Sḵwx̱wú7mesh, Kwakiutl, and Tlingit designer, artist, and cultural advocate. Rooted in traditional knowledge and lived experience, Pam creates handcrafted pieces that reflect the beauty and richness of her cultures.

Inspired by the teachings of her Elders, Pam began Touch of Culture as a personal journey of reconnection. It has since evolved into a space for artistic expression, cultural sharing, and community engagement.

Each creation—beadwork, accessories, textiles, or wearable art—is made with intention, respect, and heart. Every piece tells a story drawn from ancestral practices, family traditions, and vibrant Indigenous identity.

Beyond art, Touch of Culture empowers others through cultural workshops, mentorship, and collaboration. Pam shares her knowledge to inspire growth and connection. Supporting Touch of Culture means investing in Indigenous artistry, cultural preservation, and a future where Indigenous stories continue to thrive.

Business of the Year – three-to-ten person enterprise:
Authentic Indigenous Seafood Cooperative
Kamloops

Authentic Indigenous Seafood Cooperative supports Indigenous fishers and harvesters by building collaborative supply chains and expanding access to fair markets. Focused on environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability, the Cooperative helps communities invest in value-adding, branding, and essential infrastructure.

Rooted in tradition, it ensures profits stay within Indigenous communities and decisions are made collectively, upholding cultural values, stewardship ethics, and traditional harvesting practices. From wild salmon and shellfish to kelp and other traditional foods, all products are sustainably harvested, guided by Indigenous laws and seasonal cycles, and all processed in federally certified facilities to meet export standards.

Each offering tells a story of place, people, and empowerment, reflecting deep relationships with land and water. More than a supplier, Authentic Indigenous Seafood Cooperative is part of a larger movement for food sovereignty, self-determination, and cultural revitalization. Through partnerships, education, and advocacy, the Cooperative is working toward a future where Indigenous voices lead in shaping sustainable and just food systems.

Business of the Year – 11 + person enterprise:
Salish Soils
Sechelt

Salish Soils is an Indigenous-led waste transformation company based in Sechelt, British Columbia, on the unceded territory of the shíshálh Nation. Founded in 2010 by shíshálh entrepreneur Aaron Joe, it began as a pilot to repurpose fish waste into soil. Today, it processes over 20,000 tonnes of food scraps, green waste, wood, and biosolids annually.

Guided by shíshálh values of land stewardship and circular resource use, Salish Soils blends traditional knowledge with advanced technology to create compost, mulch, and custom soil blends for agriculture, landscaping, and land restoration.

The company has reduced landfill waste, improved soil health, and created Indigenous employment opportunities. A 2022 investment from Raven Indigenous Capital Partners is driving growth and innovation, including a premium bagged product line. Salish Soils is redefining regenerative industry in Canada—Indigenous-led, and community-driven—proving that waste is the beginning of renewal.

Community-owned Business of the Year – one entity:
Skwlāx Resource Management Ltd.
Chase

Skwlāx Resource Management (SRM) is a civil construction company wholly owned by Skwlāx te Secwepemcúl̓ecw (SteS), located in British Columbia's Central Interior. Founded under the vision of the Kúkpi7 and Council, SRM was created to foster respectful, collaborative relationships with neighbouring Secwépemc and Indigenous Nations.

Guided by the Secwépemc principle of *k̓wséltkten*—we are all family—SRM is committed to fostering economic growth, building capacity, and promoting shared prosperity. SRM believes the strength of its Nation is interconnected to the wellbeing of its people and partners. SRM's focus remains on building a balanced and prosperous future for all.

Historical alliances like the Shuswap-Okanagan Confederacy remind SRM that strong Nation-to-Nation relationships are key to mutual success. SRM works to renew these ties through cultural exchange, shared stewardship, and economic collaboration.

SRM's services span civil and infrastructure, environmental services, industrial, mining, construction, forestry, and capacity support. Through Skwlāx Aggregates, SRM supplies high-quality sand and gravel from SteS territory.

SRM operates with integrity, guided by its values: Community, Innovate, Inspire, Honour, and Accountability.

Community-owned Business of the Year – two or more entities:
Khowutzun Development Corporation
Duncan

Khowutzun Development Corporation (KDC) was established to create sustainable economic opportunities for Quw'utsun Citizens (Cowichan Tribes) while supporting community initiatives and fostering self-determination. Guided by the mission to build partnerships and support training, careers, and business ventures, KDC operates across diverse sectors including construction, project management, environmental services, green energy initiatives, and real estate development.

KDC integrates cultural knowledge and history with industry expertise to deliver high-quality, sustainable solutions that respect the land, heritage, and community. Through collaboration and accountability, the corporation upholds Quw'utsun values in every initiative.

A key driver of Indigenous economic empowerment, KDC provides opportunities for training, careers, and capacity-building for Quw'utsun Citizens through innovative initiatives like Cowichan Contractors, a group of companies that are 100% Indigenous-

owned by Quw'utsun Citizens. KDC's forward-looking leadership is rooted in community empowerment—engaging and equipping citizens with the skills needed to succeed.

As KDC continues to grow, it remains committed to ethical business practices and community-driven success, ensuring Quw'utsun voices lead the way in building a prosperous future.

Business Partnership of the Year:
Kettle River Contracting
Cranbrook

Kettle River Contracting LP (KRC) is a proudly Indigenous-owned heavy civil construction company based in Cranbrook, BC, and a subsidiary of Ktunaxa Enterprises Limited, part of the Ktunaxa Holding Limited Partnership group. Serving the resource development industry across Western Canada, KRC specializes in site preparation, road building, infrastructure development, and environmental management.

Founded by members of the Ktunaxa Nation, KRC is dedicated to economic development, job creation, and capacity building for Indigenous communities.

Guided by Ktunaxa values of stewardship, integrity, and cultural respect, KRC works collaboratively with clients, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, to align projects with community goals and environmental standards. Through its commitment to excellence and community partnership, KRC is helping shape a future where Indigenous leadership and expertise are central to building sustainable communities across the region.

Award of Distinction for Lifetime Achievement:
Harold Calla, FCPA, FCGA, CAFM
Squamish Nation

Harold Calla is Executive Chair of the First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB), supporting over 370 First Nations governments in building financial systems and accessing capital markets. A member of the Squamish Nation, he returned from international business in 1987 to serve in leadership, negotiation, and finance roles, including eight years on Squamish Council.

He was key to developing legislation that enables First Nations to move beyond the Indian Act, including the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, Land Management Act, and Oil and Gas and Moneys Management Act. He also helped form the First Nations Major Projects Coalition.

Harold serves on the boards of Trans Mountain Corporation and BC Ferries, and formerly on Fortis BC, CMHC, and others. He holds the CAFM designation and was inducted into the Accounting Hall of Fame in 2024.

He has led delegations to Australia and presented twice at the United Nations, promoting Indigenous-led governance models that support economic empowerment and self-determination through financial management.