



BC Achievement Indigenous Business Award



Photo: Ashley Michel, 4 Generations Creations, 2025 Award Recipient (Photo Credit: Christian Tisdale)

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AWARD - WHY THIS AWARD MATTERS

The **Indigenous Business Award (IBA) program** is a celebration of excellence in entrepreneurship and innovation. Led by Indigenous worldviews, the recognition lifts up **businesses and entrepreneurs** who drive transformative change within their communities and beyond.

The program recognizes Indigenous entrepreneurs who strengthen the province's **cultural and economic vitality**, fosters connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies, and shares awardees' stories to inspire future leaders and support sustained growth.

WHY NOMINATE / APPLY

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

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Nomination Deadline:** February 15, 2027 @ 11:59 p.m.
- **Awardees Announced:** Summer 2027
- **Gala & Presentation Ceremony:** Fall 2027 in Vancouver

HOW TO NOMINATE / APPLY

To submit a complete nomination, you must provide:

- **Nominator Details** (name & contact)
- **Nominee Details** (name & contact)
- **Nominee Indigenous Identity Supporting Documentation***
- **Nominator Statement** (max. 3000 characters / ~500 words)
- **Ownership Structure Statement** (max. 1250 characters / ~200 words)
- **Community Impact Statement** (max. 2000 characters / ~300 words)
- **Number of full- and/or part-time permanent employees** (Indigenous & non-Indigenous)
- **Financials** (optional, but strongly recommended)
- **One Support Letter** (max. 3000 characters / ~500 words)
- **Additional Materials** (optional but strongly recommended; max. 5 items)

Tip: If you need more time, use ‘**Save and Continue Later**’ at the bottom of the online form—you’ll receive a link to complete your nomination before the deadline.

***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 Selection Committee 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

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU START

- ✓ Review this **Nomination Guide** for **tips (see below)** and requirements
- ✓ Confirm nominator and nominee meet **eligibility criteria**
- ✓ Draft your **Nominator, Ownership Structure & Community Impact statements in a Word doc first**, then copy it into the form
- ✓ Have all nominator & nominee contact details ready
- ✓ Gather support letter and additional materials
- ✓ Allow 15–20 minutes to complete the form

CATEGORIES

Individuals and businesses may enter in **ONE category only**.

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

- Business must be at least 51% Indigenous owned and operated.
- Recognizes a young entrepreneur operating an existing business. Nominees must be **35 years or younger by February 15, 2027**, and have been in business for **at least two years**.

Business of the Year

- Business must be at least 51% Indigenous-owned and operated.
- Recognizes outstanding Indigenous-owned businesses in **three size-based categories**:
 - 1-2 employees
 - 3-10 employees
 - 11+ employees

Community-Owned Business of the Year

- Business must be 100% community-owned by the community.
- Honours one or more businesses owned by a community that strengthen long-term economic foundations for community members. **Sub-categories include**:
 - One entity
 - Two or more entities

Business Partnership of the Year

- At least 50% Indigenous Ownership.
- Recognizes a successful business partnership between 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 the **Indigenous Business Award webpage** 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:

- Members of the selection committee or their immediate family may not submit a nomination
 - BC Achievement board members may not submit a nomination
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NOMINEE ELIGIBILITY

An eligible nominee must be a business:

- At least 51% Indigenous-owned and operated (First Nations, Métis or Inuit)
- Based in British Columbia
- In operation for at least two years

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

The following are ineligible:

- Government agencies and institutions
- Businesses operated or owned by BC Achievement board members
- Businesses operated or owned by a member of the selection committee
- Posthumous nominations
- Recent past IBA award recipients* (check [past awardees](#))

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

The following individuals are ineligible to receive the Award of Distinction:

- A current BC Achievement board member
- A current member of the selection committee
- Posthumous nominations

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

WRITING A STRONG NOMINATION

Nominees will be evaluated based on the following **four criteria**. When preparing your nomination, describe how the nominee demonstrates each area using **clear examples and specific details and outcomes** wherever possible.

- 1. Leadership** - The nominee demonstrates leadership within their community. They create opportunities, make decisions that benefit others, inspire employees, partners, and the broader community.
 - 2. Community Impact** - The nominee contributes to the economic and social well-being of their community. They provide job opportunities, training, mentorship, and prioritize cultural revitalization, environmental stewardship, and other benefits that create meaningful and lasting change.
 - 3. Innovation** - The nominee brings new ideas, approaches, or solutions to their work. They adapt to challenges, develop creative business models, introduce new products or services, and strengthen Indigenous knowledge and practices through innovative thinking.
 - 4. Sustainability** - The nominee demonstrates long-term sustainability through financial stability, responsible practices, growth and succession planning, and a commitment to supporting both the business and the community over time.
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IMPORTANT TIPS

- **Tip 1:** Use specific stories, examples, or outcomes to show how the nominee meets each criterion.
- **Tip 2:** Tell the nominee's story with clear, concrete details rather than broad descriptions.
- **Tip 3.** Avoid general statements like "works hard" or "is dedicated". Explain **what** they do, **how** they do it, and the results of their efforts.
- **Tip 4.** Quantify impact where possible (e.g., jobs created, years in operation, partnerships formed, revenue growth, community benefits).

NOMINATOR STATEMENT (MAX 3000 CHARACTERS INCLUDING SPACES | ~500 WORDS):

Use the full word count for the nominator statement to provide a thorough, well-rounded, and engaging description of the nominee's achievements.

- ✔ **Tell their story** in a way that paints a **vivid picture** for someone who doesn't know them
- ✔ Describe the business's mission, vision and goals
- ✔ Include background information about the nominee and business
- ✔ Explain why the nominee started the business, how it has grown in size and scope since its inception
- ✔ Describe extraordinary circumstances or challenges the nominee has faced
- ✔ Indicate if the nominee has an Indigenous employment strategy
- ✔ Address what inspires the nominee
- ✔ Include context, background, notable challenges, or special circumstances

Note: The jury values 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.

OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE STATEMENT (MAX 1250 CHARACTERS INCLUDING SPACES | ~200 WORDS):

- ✔ Provide details about the business structure, including ownership and management
- ✔ List the names and titles of the individuals who own and manage the business

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT (MAX 2000 CHARACTERS INCLUDING SPACES | ~300 WORDS):

- ✔ Describe the nominee's impact on their community and how their business contributes to economic well-being
- ✔ Explain how the nominee supports job creation, training, mentorship, leadership development, environmental stewardship, cultural revitalizations, and other social benefits
- ✔ Provide examples of how the nominee demonstrates leadership through both their business practices and active involvement in the community
- ✔ Highlight the business's visibility, long-term contributions, including economic development, sustained growth, and future opportunities

SUPPORT LETTER (MAX 3000 CHARACTERS INCLUDING SPACES | ~500 WORDS):

- ✔ Must be written by an individual **other than the nominator**
- ✔ Should be addressed to the 'Selection Committee'
- ✔ Should include the writer's full name and contact information (address, email, phone)
- ✔ Written **specifically for the Indigenous Business Award program**
- ✔ Should describe the nominee's impact in detail
- ✔ Should explain the relationship between the writer and nominee
- ✔ Referees should know the nominee well and speak from firsthand experience
- ✔ Request letters early to ensure strong, thoughtful letters

FINANCIALS STATEMENT (OPTIONAL BUT 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](#).

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS (OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED):

- Include materials such as the nominee’s biography, CV, additional letters of support, *links to articles, recorded testimonials, YouTube videos, photos, etc.
- A maximum of five items will be accepted
- If the total of all the ‘Additional Materials’ is more than ten pages OR five minutes of video OR five weblinks, the jury members will only review up to these limits, due to time constraints

Note: The nominator may upload **one word or PDF document** with **up to five links** in the ‘Additional Materials’ section.

*Each web link counts as one Additional Material.

UPDATING A PREVIOUS NOMINATION

Nominations are valid for **three years**. To update:

- Use the online form and select **‘Yes’ to the question** “Is this an update to a previous nomination?”
- Indicate the original year of submission
- Update with new information and materials (you may include the support letter previously submitted or upload a new one for the Selection Committee’s review)

Need help? We can send you your previous submission—email indigenousbusiness@bcachievement.com.

HOW AWARDEES ARE SELECTED & RECOGNIZED

An independent Selection Committee of Indigenous business leaders reviews the nominations and selects recipients based on the evaluation criteria. The Committee’s decision is final. **Nominees are only contacted if selected.** The nominee is encouraged to let their nominator know they’ve been selected to receive the award.

Awardees receive a **cash bursary, a recognition film**, a commemorative plaque certificate, and a medallion and lapel pin designed by renowned artist Robert Davidson, OC, OBC. They are also granted use of the Indigenous Business Award seal and honoured at the **IBA Gala** dinner in Vancouver celebrating their achievements.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. Can information be saved on the nomination form and completed at a later date?** Yes. Click **“Save and Continue Later”** at the bottom of the online form. **Enter your email to receive a link** that allows you to return and complete your nomination before the deadline.
- 2. Is a nomination considered for more than one year?** Nominations begin a three-year program and may be reviewed by up to three selection committees. Nominators are given the opportunity to update their nomination each year.
- 3. When are awardees notified and where are the names of the awardees published?** Awardees are notified late summer. Their names are published on BC Achievement’s website and social media channels and shared via press release in the fall.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Does the business have to be registered?** No, but the business must provide goods and/or services to consumers.
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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.
- 8. If I am 35 years old, can I only apply for the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award category?** Nominees aged **35 or younger** by the nomination deadline may apply for the Young Entrepreneur category OR a business category (if eligible), but only one category may be selected.
- 9. Should occasional, part-time and full-time employees be counted separately?** Please count only permanent full- or part-time staff. Temporary or short-term increases in staffing may be described in your business summary but should not be included in your total employee count.
- 10. 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.

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 Indigenous Business Award program and other promotional activities on BC Achievement’s website, social media channels etc.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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