



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Executive Director named for new Indigenous Prosperity Centre on South Vancouver Island**

(Victoria, B.C.) The [Indigenous Prosperity Centre](#) is pleased to announce Christina Clarke as its inaugural Executive Director.

Created in 2021 by South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP), the Indigenous Prosperity Centre (IPC) is an Indigenous-led initiative to support Indigenous interests and enhance economic reconciliation on southern Vancouver Island.

Clarke's wealth of experience includes First Nations governance, policy and law development, community engagement and economic development. She was most recently CEO of the Songhees Development Corporation.

Clarke honours both her NunatuKavut (Inuit-European of Labrador) grandmother and her Irish-born grandfather. "My ancestors walked in two worlds and I do also in my work today."

In 2022, she was appointed to the University of Victoria's Board of Governors, where she is an alum with a Bachelor of Arts in Canadian History and Anthropology. Clarke earned a Certificate in First Nations Tax Administration from Thompson Rivers University and the Tulo Centre for Indigenous Economics.

"I am honoured by the opportunity to contribute to regional Indigenous economic development," says Clarke. "We have all the ingredients for a thriving economy and true prosperity, defined in the broadest sense to include well-being for everyone and our environment. To get there, we need to work as One. As we bring our strengths together, across all sectors, in an ecosystem that supports innovation, collaboration and inclusion, the Indigenous Prosperity Centre will create a connection point for Indigenous business and communities."

The call to action for an Indigenous-led economic development organization on southern Vancouver Island was raised by Indigenous leaders participating in the Rising Economy Taskforce's Indigenous Economy Committee and emphasized as one of the 10 Pillars of Recovery in [Reboot: Greater Victoria's Economic Recovery Plan](#), released in November 2020.

Indigenous Leaders noted their economies were hit hard by the pandemic, which exacerbated pre-COVID-19 challenges with infrastructure, training and workforce development, and access to capital for business development. The *Reboot* report said that "ensuring Indigenous workers and businesses are fully included in recovery is what will lead to a truly resilient and prosperous economy."

Responding to that call for action, Indigenous leaders, together with [South Island Prosperity Partnership](#) (SIPP), formed an IPC Committee to create the framework and attract seed funding.

“We need to support the promotion and growth of the Indigenous economy,” says Emilie de Rosenroll, CEO of SIPP. “We will all benefit greatly from the expansion of Indigenous innovation, practices, and economic leadership. Christina Clarke is well respected for her dedication to collaboration and strengthening Indigenous economic development.”

Clarke’s priority is engaging with local Indigenous leaders. She, along with members of the IPC Committee, assisted by Indigenomics Institute CEO Carol Anne Hilton, are embarking upon a Learning Tour to listen to the needs and goals of each First Nation in the South Island region.

She says “the focus is on connecting with communities and entrepreneurs on an individual level. Every community has unique goals, and we want to ensure we support the growth they want.”

IPC is supported in its work by two major funding partners, each committed to growing and promoting the South Island’s Indigenous Economy. CIBC and Vancity have provided significant investment to help launch the Centre.

“CIBC is proud to support SIPP and its new initiative, the Indigenous Prosperity Centre,” said Linda Harford, Executive Director, Indigenous Markets, CIBC. “We look forward to continuing to work together towards a shared goal of Indigenous prosperity and providing access to opportunities for the next generation of leaders and changemakers in the South Island community.”

Andrea Harris, Vice President, Impact Strategy at Vancity says “as part of our commitment to put Reconciliation into action, we’re pleased to extend our collaboration with SIPP and support the launch of the Indigenous Prosperity Centre. We’re grateful for this opportunity to deepen Vancity’s relationship with our partners, supporting and facilitating Indigenous-led paths to economic prosperity. We’re very excited to witness the impact that a growing Indigenous economy will have on surrounding communities.”

“We’ve worked with both CIBC and Vancity on several initiatives for SIPP,” says de Rosenroll. “Both have stepped up in a big way, with a genuine desire to help strengthen the local Indigenous economy. We are grateful for their commitment.”

To learn more about the Indigenous Prosperity Centre, visit [www.indigenous-prosperity.ca](http://www.indigenous-prosperity.ca).

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**For further information, please contact:**

Amanda Wilson, Marketing & Communications Manager, Indigenous Prosperity Centre

Mobile: 250-216-5663

Email: [amanda@southislandprosperity.ca](mailto:amanda@southislandprosperity.ca)

**ADDITIONAL QUOTES:**

“Economic opportunities for Indigenous people, communities and businesses are rapidly growing and I’ve been lucky to be able to work with the IPC team to be at the cutting edge of this work. The IPC will help provide support to those who need or want it to maximize their benefit from these opportunities by providing a platform for industry and proponents to connect with

Indigenous businesses to achieve their goals. It will bring people together who are passionate about business and Indigenous inclusion to help be change makers in our space.”

- *Kear Porttris, Director Indigenous Relations, QM Environmental, and member of the IPC Working Committee.*

"The Indigenous Prosperity Centre has a vital role in understanding and supporting the needs of local Indigenous communities in their efforts to realize economic prosperity in a manner designed by and governed by themselves. The projects and activities undertaken by IPC will directly benefit local nations and potentially create additional positive impacts on neighbouring nations as relationships are built. With its local focus and Indigenous involvement, IPC represents the type of networked organization that draws on the strengths of many partners to help fulfill Indigenous goals and aspirations." - *Susanne Thiessen, PhD, Assistant Professor at the University of Victoria in the School of Public Administration and a member of the IPC Working Committee.*

## **INDIGENOUS PROSPERITY CENTRE**

The role of the IPC is to:

- promote Indigenous-led prosperity approaches and strategies that balance community wellbeing and values based on Indigenous practices.
- encourage and protect Indigenous-led innovation while supporting the stewardship of ocean resources
- create meaningful partnerships and mutually beneficial opportunities based on an Indigenous values-driven approach to attaining shared community economic prosperity
- augment and amplify economic and workforce development activities at an individual Nation level while providing essential services to smaller Nations and off-reserve Indigenous Peoples.

## **SOUTH ISLAND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP**

[South Island Prosperity Partnership](#) (SIPP) represents a new era of economic development for Greater Victoria. Its mission is to build a more innovative, diversified, inclusive and sustainable economy for Southern Vancouver Island.

SIPP was formed in April 2016 to bolster the region's economic and social prosperity. This mandated regional economic development alliance includes 10 municipalities, nine First Nations communities, five chambers of commerce, three post-secondary institutions, and many of the region's major employers, nonprofits and business organizations.

In the six years since SIPP launched, it has grown from 29 to over 70 members and achieved major milestones with a small, agile team and an extensive, engaged network of members and community partners.

## **GROWING THE INDIGENOUS ECONOMY**

According to the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) the Indigenous economy contributes \$32 billion dollars to Canada's GDP annually, with projections of a \$100 billion dollar impact within 20 years. Its potential is hampered by the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

In its 2022 [National Indigenous Economic Strategy](#), the National Indigenous Economic Development Board (NIEDB) said that it is estimated that “closing the productivity gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians would lead to an increase of \$27.7 billion to Canada’s gross domestic product (GDP) each year.”

The report adds “if Indigenous Peoples were given the same access to economic opportunities available to other Canadians, the resulting increase in employment would result in an additional \$6.9 billion per year in employment income and approximately 135,000 newly employed Indigenous Peoples.”