



Annual Report 2024 2025

Building Pathways and Foundations
Toward Innovation, Membership Growth,
Partnerships, and Value

July 3, 2025



Indigenous Works

Table of Contents

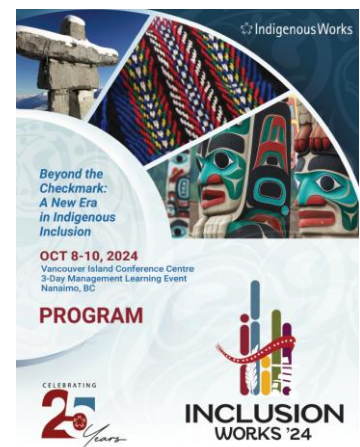
Introduction and Highlights.....	3
Employer Partner Program Update	7
Diagnostics and Training	8
Advisory Services	8
Luminary	11
Kocihta	14
Board Members	15
Staff Members	16

Introduction and Highlights

- **Indigenous Works** marked a good year in **2024-2025**, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary as one notable achievement. The organization expanded one of its program areas within its Human Resource Division and proudly launched the Luminary program, backed by a new \$4 million contribution from the federal government's Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development's Strategic Science Fund. The past year saw **measured progress** for Indigenous Works Organization Inc. reflecting a successful financial performance with a few significant milestones achieved and the identification of **new areas of further revenue growth** which will be leveraged in the coming three-year period.
- The **Board of Directors** maintained a strong focus on growth and strategy during their regular meetings throughout the year. They established an ambitious three-year plan aiming for consistent annual growth for Indigenous Works Organization Inc. This vision encompasses enhancing services, programs, and activities that provide value to **Luminary, the Human Resource Division, Kocihta**, and the individuals and organizations they serve. Bringing these entities into stronger strategic alignment and building organizational capacity remains a significant theme in discussions among the Executive team and the Board of Directors.
- With the anticipated retirement of the current senior managers within the next three years, Indigenous Works must hire middle managers who can transition into these senior roles when necessary. To achieve smooth succession planning and **foster further organizational growth**, Indigenous Works requires additional capacity in areas such as marketing and sales. The challenge ahead involves strengthening the organization to ensure it continues to operate effectively over the next 25 years. Achieving this will require increased organizational capacity, necessitating more revenue and a larger infrastructure to drive growth. Determining how to achieve this scale of operations is **the essential question**.
- In 2024-25 the Board initiated a restructuring to strengthen the governance framework of Indigenous Works Organization Inc. The

reorganization positions this corporate entity as the primary body overseeing **Indigenous Works HRD, Luminary, and Kocihta**. The Board will continue efforts to enhance these **structural connections**, reporting relationships, and governance frameworks through 2025-2028, including in the short term the review of by-laws and other essential governance elements.

- These changes to and priorities for Indigenous Works are being introduced at a time of some **economic uncertainty** in Canada for private sector, governments, post-secondary institutions, and labour organizations. Indigenous political organizations have won significant ground on their rights and on the growth of their institutions and programs which will further build community, regional and national economies. In this continuing journey for Canada, Indigenous Works has a valuable role to play helping to build the skills of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in areas of Indigenous-led research and commercialization, in employment, and to make fundamental enhancements to the **Indigenous human resource development, innovation and philanthropic ecosystems**.
- Indigenous Works celebrated its **25th anniversary** at its Inclusion Works event held on Oct 8 to 10, 2024, in Nanaimo, BC. The theme of this year's learning event was **"Going Beyond the Checkmark."** The Inclusion Works' program showcased and shared strategies and practices among private, public, and Indigenous organizations, providing deeper management learning, ideas, and strategies to ensure employers are going beyond the checkmark. A 25th Anniversary video featuring interviews with Pat Baxter, Anne Noonan, Charley Coffey, Stephen Lindley, Kelly Lendsay, and others provided commentary on the Indigenous employment landscape 25 years ago and the changes that have ensued over the period that Indigenous Works has been operating. Inclusion Works was attended by an enthusiastic audience who welcomed the opportunity to hear speakers and learn from one another. **Peer learning** with other companies and organizations is an important draw and service which Indigenous Works can offer its Employer Partner members. **Generous sponsors and supporters** of the event included Calian, BCI, Definity, Finning, BDC, CPHR BC, RBC, and several others.



- Indigenous Works continues to achieve reach through its **social media channels and networks**. It achieves its current reach through Speaking Engagements and Social Media. Examples of social media reach are provided here.
- LinkedIn: 17,304+ IW managed Aboriginal Professional Network 8,405+ IW Managed 4,733= Total LinkedIn - 30,442
- Facebook: 8,141 followers
- Twitter: 730 followers

The use of social media will be instrumental over the next three years as Indigenous Works seeks to **further grow and scale its program offers**. It will put into place a stronger and more consistent social media campaign to introduce new revenue channels. Marketing and sales will follow up on these campaigns.

- Some **notable partnerships** were developed and sustained in 24/25. As one example, within the HRD Division, a Memorandum of Understanding was established with **E-Global Learning** a consulting group that has reach across Canada, USA, and UK. This Group does employment systems reviews with strengths in all equity groups except Indigenous. This complementarity in expertise and market interests will offer new opportunities for IW HRD. As a test, we bid together on a major systems review, and we are waiting to hear the results of our joint proposal. Other partnerships include our collaboration with the **Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)**. We market a joint membership program and hold an annual Dreammakers Learning Event with CCDI. A third example of partnership include the relationships we have built with **the Canadian Professional Human Resource Associations**, both provincially and nationally. These are just three examples of partnerships which have been developed in the HRD area. In Luminary and Kocihta there are still further examples. Collectively our partnerships offer many opportunities for future leverage and growth.
- During the reporting period Indigenous Works continued to demonstrate **administrative excellence** in a variety of ways.

1. **Effective governance performance and planning.** The strategic planning activities that continue to be a feature of the board meetings have helped provide a pathway for future growth and stability for Indigenous Works.

2. Luminary was awarded funds under the new Strategic Science Fund (SSF) as one of only 23 organizations in Canada. It was the **only Indigenous organization to receive this funding**. The launch of Luminary's SSF initiative commenced in April 2025 with the hiring of 2.5 new employees. Further information is available in the Luminary section of this Annual Report.

3. In 2023/24 Indigenous Works introduced our new Indigenous Skills and Development Training Fund which is eligible under the government's **Industrial and Technology Benefits (ITB)/Industrial Regional Benefits Policy**. Contributions to the ISDT Fund by "obligor contracting companies"



translate into direct credit for their Canadian Content Value (CCV) expenditures - a game-changing incentive that accelerates compliance with Canadian content obligations. This innovative structuring is already making waves, particularly in our seaweed project, where we're actively exploring applications of the ITB program. Even greater rewards await obligors who support **Indigenous research initiatives**, offering **an amplified CCV factor**. Collaborations with Northlands College and the Pacific Seaweed Association are propelling this direction forward, as referenced in the Luminary section of this Annual Report. As Canada ramps up its defense spending in the coming years, the ITB mechanism opens unprecedented doors for Indigenous Works to partner with contractors in this booming sector.

4. Indigenous Works' Annual 2024/2025 **ISO re-certification** was approved during the reporting period. This certification continues to be a way for Indigenous Works to differentiate itself from other

Indigenous organizations and consultants. Few Indigenous organizations have attained this certification. In addition to ISO adding to our brand reputation, the practices adopted by our organization in alignment with this quality management system and certification have been highly beneficial.

Employer Partner Program Update

The Employer Partner Program (EPP) has been adapting to challenges head-on. Membership numbers reached 103 by March 31, 2024, and we have an ambitious goal to double numbers to 200. To enhance the program and attract more members, Indigenous Works brought in a consultant in November 2024 for an independent analysis, pinpointing critical areas for improvement. Key findings revealed the need for more direct engagement and support for employer partners, alongside dedicated marketing and sales assets to drive growth.

Monthly webinars are drawing larger audiences and rave reviews. Members appreciate the 40 new tip sheets and knowledge bulletins housed in the Member Portal. Steady usage of the job board facilities adds to the program's foundational strength, proving its potential for future success. The consultant's report noted these issues.

- More frequent contact and support for employer partners is needed.
- The program will continue to experience growth once dedicated marketing and sales assets are in place.
- The program's Member Portal houses extensive archives: monthly webinar recordings and materials, 40 new tip sheets and information bulletins and other knowledge assets.
- The program has seen an increased audience and participation in its monthly webinars. Reviews are favourable.
- Usage of job board facilities remained steady over a year's period though with fluctuations, month to month.

The EP Program will be scaled up over the next three years by increasing partner value, growing marketing channels, promoting new members, and facilitating peer learning and networking. This is an important flagship program for Indigenous Works with significant and further upwards potential.

Diagnostics and Training

This year, Indigenous Works HRD continued to offer its **Diagnostic Assessment and its Indigenous Employer of Choice Certification Programs**. These strategic tools help organizations evaluate their current practices, align internally, develop an efficient organization-wide Indigenous inclusion strategy, and establish a measurable baseline and a 3-year roadmap for Indigenous inclusion. These programs offer significant revenue and value potential, and with more marketing other companies will pursue this excellent program.

Indigenous Works has had stronger results with its training sessions. A key accomplishment over the past two years has been to **standardize training offers**. In fiscal 24/25 we held training programs with 20 organizations. All of this was done virtually.

Indigenous Works has **exceptionally strong intellectual property**, and it has built models like the Inclusion Continuum and our 9-point workplace inclusion framework which employers find useful to chart their progress. **Our training offer could be expanded** either by building new curricula on our own or by partnering with organizations that have experience in this field. Promotions and marketing are needed to build interest among our Employer Partners and among external audiences.

Further evaluation is required to determine the unique aspects of our training programs that set them apart from others. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of competitors entering this field. Universities are providing comprehensive learning programs on Indigenous history and culture at no cost as an example. Our goal over the next three years is to further grow and better market these programs and unlock the value of these assets for our clients.

Organizations that Have Pursued the Diagnostic Assessment and Employer of Choice Certification

1. Accenture
2. Access Independent
3. AETS
4. BC Hydro
5. Belle Pulses
6. Calian
7. Canuck Place
8. Farm Credit Canada
9. Home Depot
10. Hydro One
11. Interac
12. L'Oreal
13. Pacific Blue Health
14. Proctor and Gamble
15. Shaw Cable
16. Toronto Community Housing
17. York Regional Municipality

Advisory Services

Indigenous Works HRD grew its Advisory Services taking on a variety of consulting work from clients in the government and private sector. Clients included BDC

Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Canada. Home Depot, and Alto High-speed Rail Project. Several of these projects will have residual client work in 25/26. Highlights of Indigenous Works HRD's client work is listed here.

- Collaborated with **BDC to create “A Tactical Plan to Achieve 2024 Indigenous Employment Goals”**. Since their 2019 Indigenous Employment Systems Review by Indigenous Works, significant changes at BDC created the need for this plan.
- Developed a **“Preliminary Indigenous Employment and Human Resource Development (HRD) Strategy for Alto and its High-speed Rail Project”**. The proposed strategy builds on analyses and reports prepared by Indigenous Works for Alto from January to March 2025, which examined issues and opportunities relevant to Indigenous employment in the Quebec City-Toronto high-speed rail project. This work focused on the employment and HRD needs of Indigenous people and their potential for careers in the project.
- Completed a planning and research initiative and a final report entitled **“Building a Centre for the Resolution of Specific Claims: Background and Four-Year Plan”**. The purpose of this report was to provide the **Specific Claims Branch (SCB) of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)** and the **Specific Claims Implementation Working Group (SCIWG)** with an illustrative business model and costing for a new Centre for the Resolution of Specific Claims (“the Centre”).
- Partnered with **Canadian Mental Health Association Durham** (Ontario), Indigenous Works developed three background planning reports focused on the association's ability to build engagements and relationships with the Indigenous mental health eco-system and to co-design more culturally relevant programs and services.
- Completed a research paper for the Strategic Policy and Partnerships Section of **Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)** about Statutory Transfers. This contract originates with ISC and their work with the Indigenous **2019 Joint Advisory Committee on Fiscal Relations** which provided Canada with the recommendations needed to achieve progress on a new fiscal relationship, including statutory transfers. Our paper provided a **Background Discussion** document to further enable ISC to advance exploration of statutory funding in the Indigenous context.

- Produced an Environmental, Social, and Governance (**ESG**) **Policy and Plan** for the **Chartered Professions in Human Resource Canada** which represents 31,000 members in the Human Resources Profession across nine provinces and three territories in Canada.
- Continued our work with **Home Depot** building an Indigenous policy, strategy, Reconciliation Plan, systems, training, and organizational

mechanisms for inclusion. Currently conducting a pilot project on employment with the **Indigenous Skills and Employment Training** organizations in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg.

In addition to these client jobs, the **Advisory Services** team also fulfilled on project work stemming from donations to Kocihta, under service agreements struck between **Indigenous Works** and our charity. This administrative arrangement is explained further in the brief section of this report about Kocihta. Fulfillment projects are described here.

- Completed a research and thought-leadership white paper for **Definity Insurance Inc.** “**Building Indigenous Economic Reconciliation and Well-being in Canada: Roles for the Insurance Industry and Definity**”. This paper was produced by Indigenous Works HRD as part of a donation by Definity to our charity, Kocihta.
- A paper on the “**Indigenous Seaweed Sector Value Chain**” has built a feature model that will be used in future roundtables which will be scheduled for west and east coasts in 2025/2026 using funds approved for Kocihta by the McConnell Foundation in 2023. A brief profile of the Seaweed Initiative is provided in the Luminary section of this Annual Report.

Indigenous Works HRD has successfully established and expanded a niche-oriented **consulting Group** with specialization in Indigenous human resource development, employment, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and accessibility, and a wide band of policy work. The range of jobs we took on in 24/25 was illustrative of our ability to develop customized teams with different expertise to match the needs of a wide range of clients and issues. Consulting offers a further area for growth in the future.

Luminary

Luminary was among 23 proponents chosen for the federal **Strategic Science Fund (SSF)**, and it was the sole Indigenous recipient. The five-year, \$4.0 million SSF initiative started in April 2025 with 2.5 new hires. Over three years leading to the program's award and official launch, Luminary built experience, a support network, and **the foundations for its 2024/25 rollout**. Luminary is actively addressing issues to strengthen Canada's competitiveness, while promoting the role of Indigenous businesses and communities in the shifting national economy. As we head into a period of deepening trade diversification and stronger country-wide **major projects**, Luminary's engagement work will be increasingly important.

Canada is facing challenges in the innovation sector, as indicated by metrics such as patent generation and utilization. Relative to other nations, Canada's patent activity has declined. Furthermore, government innovation strategies have often not fully capitalized on the country's intellectual resources to drive economic growth, a view shared by various stakeholders and organizations. According to The Conference Board of Canada's Innovation Report Card, **Canada received a "C" grade**, ranking 15th out of 20 countries. Out of twenty-one measured innovation indicators, Canada falls **below average** on fourteen. Additionally, Canada is ranked 15th in the 2023 Global Innovation Index (GII), with limited progress observed in innovation outputs.

The lack of Indigenous-led research partnerships, particularly in areas of Indigenous business development, and the lack of commercial innovation of that research, are two of the complex issues that are driving Luminary. In the main, there are **gaps** in Indigenous access to the programs that Canada has developed to encourage innovation. Post-secondary institutions lack engagement strategies and the knowledge to work closely with Indigenous Peoples to advance community research priorities. There is a lack of Indigenous business curricula in Canada's leading business schools and these schools continue to be unable to attract Indigenous students. The Indigenous business and economic community lacks orientation to commercial innovation programs.

Canada faces ongoing challenges in advancing Indigenous research and innovation, which requires culturally relevant strategies to promote equity and economic growth. Luminary acts as a key facilitator, connecting Indigenous communities with higher education and innovation sectors to support economic transformation, employment, and wellbeing.

In 24/25 Luminary sought to build connections between Indigenous and post-secondary /innovation ecosystems by introducing a membership program that will provide many tools, information, and learning to help bridge gaps. This year focused on **program-building** with Luminary developing webinars, engagement tools, and materials which will form the backbone of the **membership program**. Promotional materials explaining the value offer of the program have been carefully built and advanced marketing has been underway for several months. Committees were struck with college and university networks which have helped drive the program content and approaches. When the membership program is officially rolled out in early **fall 2025** Luminary anticipates a robust response.

Luminary hosted the **Indigenous Innovation Summit** from January 23-25, 2025, at the Sheraton Wild Pass Canyon in Gila Nation, Phoenix. Co-hosted by Dr. Manley Begay (Northern Arizona University) and facilitated by Dr. Mark Maletz (Harvard Business School), the event brought together 130 participants from Indigenous businesses, organizations, and academic fields. Discussions focused on Luminary's future programming, Indigenous innovation over the next decade, and effective support strategies, including research talent development, collaboration, knowledge networks, and economic development.

Chief Executive Transformation Officer Kelly Lendsay's November 2024 visit to Australia and New Zealand also advanced support for Luminary, including an Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (**ANZAM**) partnership to strengthen international Indigenous research and innovation dialogue. These collaborations highlight the importance of Luminary building global knowledge networks and opportunities with Indigenous Peoples, particularly in countries impacted by colonialist histories.

In the past year, Luminary's SSF programming also designed and implemented the **first ever National Indigenous Business School Engagement Survey**. The survey was developed with input from business school deans and various advisory committees, who contributed to its structure and dissemination. The results are expected to provide data on Indigenous engagement in areas such as business pedagogy, partnerships, employment, curriculum, and knowledge systems. This research aims to inform institutions about standards and practices for Indigenous engagement strategies. Findings will help institutions improve engagement strategies and guide Luminary's future program development by highlighting key gaps. Later in its SSF programming Luminary has allocated funds for a follow-up survey to determine if engagement gaps are closing. There are also opportunities

for Luminary to broaden the survey work with business schools in other countries to gather comparative data and insights. This too would be “a first”.

The business school survey will help Luminary evaluate programs and improve standards to **better support Indigenous-led research and innovation**. Few Indigenous students currently earn business degrees, highlighting a need for stronger Indigenous business curricula. Business schools must adapt their education offerings to better engage Indigenous youth and the business community and to close these participation gaps. The survey will give Luminary the data and credibility needed to lead these changes. The longer-term goal is to create a **stronger Indigenous research and innovation ecosystem** so that more and faster Indigenous **business start-ups** can be facilitated, and Indigenous business and economic diversification can be achieved.

An example of this economic diversification this year is that Luminary worked with Indigenous communities, industry, and education partners to develop a strategy and research plan for a sustainable Indigenous seaweed sector. Key achievements included hosting the first sector roundtable, facilitating Indigenous partnerships, launching the Seaweed Sector Knowledge Hub and Network, and starting an **Industrial Research Project (IRB)** on seaweed drying. Indigenous entry to this \$17.5 Billion global sector is at its infancy and there are opportunities to grow its participation guided by Indigenous principles and knowledge. This is an opportunity for Luminary and its partners to facilitate community-based research and innovation in **new and exciting ways**.

Over the next five years Luminary will raise funds through its membership programs, contract services and through the sale of innovation tools and information products. The goal is to match the \$4 Million SSF funds with \$1 million in leveraged funds. Work also commenced on a **Sustainability Plan** this year which would see Luminary raising substantially more funds in the future over and above the matching funds required under its SSF Agreement. Opportunities for Luminary are to leverage research funds, enter arrangements with programs such as Lab2Market, and to play a strategic role in helping to cultivate a more fertile start-up ecosystem and culture for the Indigenous business community.

Kocihta

In 2007 Indigenous Works created a standalone charity providing “**Indigenous peoples with training, coaching, tutoring, mentoring, internship and apprenticeship on issues relevant to career development and... the practical skills necessary to acquire and sustain employment and to start new businesses.**” The charitable entity took the name “Kocihta” in 2013. Managed by its own Board of Directors It runs a donations program and receives funds from corporate and philanthropic donors. Kocihta's program focuses on Indigenous youth, career development, and addressing disabilities.

The Charity enters into Services Agreements with Indigenous Works to provide accounting, administrative and fundraising services. Expenses of \$88,853 were paid to Indigenous Works in 2024 to assist with its Seaweed project and to develop a thought-leadership paper for one of Kocihta’s corporate donors.

Over the next three years, Indigenous Works HRD and Kocihta will focus on expanding and diversifying Canada's Indigenous labour market talent pipeline. Strategic initiatives will be implemented through programs aimed at philanthropic entities such as foundations, major corporations, unions, governments, and other stakeholders. These efforts are intended to generate revenue, support fundraising activities, and provide culturally relevant career information and opportunities for Indigenous youth. The Human Resource Development (HRD) Division of Indigenous Works and Kocihta have similar missions and client bases, allowing for aligned strategies in program development, management, and marketing.

The goal is to increase Kocihta's philanthropic revenues from \$500,000 to \$1,500,000 within 1-3 years. The funds will support new programs aimed at Indigenous human resource development. Enhanced fundraising efforts will expand Indigenous Works' HRD and national influence, strengthening Kocihta's role in Indigenous philanthropy and improving the Indigenous talent pipeline through better career planning tools and integrated learning experiences.

Board Members

During Fiscal 2023-2024 the following served on Indigenous Works' Board of Directors.

- Pat Baxter (Co-chair), Consultant
- Stephen Lindley (Co-chair), Consultant
- Ken Bell, Vice President, Strategic Planning, Syncrude
- Kelly Lendsay, President & CEO, Indigenous Works
- Shawn MacDonald, RBC Financial Group
- Candice Metallic, Principal, Metallic Law
- Jesse Perley, Director First Nations Affairs/Indigenous Relations
- Shaun Soonias, Vice President, Indigenous Relations, Farm Credit Canada

During the reporting period Jonathan Davey, National Director Aboriginal Financial Services, Scotiabank, resigned his position on Indigenous Works' Board of Directors. The Board appreciates his service.

Kocihta has its own board of directors. During the reporting period it consisted of:

- Charlie Coffey
- Lillian Dyck
- Anne Noonan

Lillian Dyck has given her resignation after serving the Kocihta board since its inception in 2013/14.

Staff Members

Subash Biswal, CPA, CGA - Chief Financial and Business Development Officer

Tasha Brooks, Ph.D.- Research Director

Craig Hall, MBA - Senior Vice President - Strategy and Innovation

Nicole Huska, BA - Senior Consultant Training and Advisory

Kelly Lendsay, MBA, ICD.D - President and CEO

Terri-Lynn Morrisson, MBA Candidate, Chief Program Officer, Luminary

Terra MacPhail** - Sales Consultant - Partners and Sponsors

Morgan Murphy, BSc, MSs, - Program & Membership Manager, Luminary

Adam Poitras - Web and IT Manager Rudy Rehn - Project Accountant

Paula Sawyer - Administration Coordinator

Michael Stushnoff** - Sales Consultant - Employer Partner Program

[** indicates that the individual left the organization during 24/25]

