

Walking The Path of Transformation: A Journey of Practice

Implementation Update on Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters (IERM)

To: Benchers

Purpose: Update

From: Sherry Small, Director, Indigenous Initiatives

Date: February 6, 2026

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an overview of the newly established role, including the leadership style, vision and foundational goals of the Director of Indigenous Initiatives in relation to the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation at the Law Society. Following a review of the Law Society's current practices, the Director of Indigenous Initiatives has developed a Journey of Practice - a relational, experiential, and ongoing learning pathway for Senior Leadership, Benchers, Management, and Staff. This framework integrates the Law Society's Strategic Plan and the Indigenous Engagement in Regulatory Matters ("IERM") Task Force Report recommendations, and establishes a sustainable, practice-based approach to Indigenous engagement across all regulatory functions.
2. The report also provides a review of the current Indigenous engagement across the Law Society and an update on progress made since the commencement of the new Director.
3. The report also serves as the third annual update of the actions taken, and actions anticipated to be taken, towards implementation of the IERM Task Force Report recommendations, which were unanimously approved at the Bencher meeting on July 14, 2023.

Director's Reflection: Entering This Work in Good Relation

4. In my first months with the Law Society, I have focused on listening, observing, and building relationships to understand how Indigenous engagement has been approached to date. What I have observed is a sincere commitment to reconciliation paired with areas that are in need of structural improvement for the organization to move beyond symbolic or compliance-based actions.
5. The IERM recommendations were intended to guide systemic transformation. However, without continuity, documentation, or a shared framework, the work is at risk of being perceived as a series of tasks. For systemic transformation to be realized, sustained practice grounded in Indigenous law, relational accountability, and the Law Society's own commitments is imperative.
6. My role is to support the organization in shifting from awareness to practice, from policy to relationship, and from intention to daily action. The Journey of Practice and the Internal Working Group are the structures that will carry this shift forward.

Role of the Director of Indigenous Initiatives

7. The Director of Indigenous Initiatives provides strategic leadership, cultural expertise, and relational guidance to support the Law Society in fulfilling its commitments to Indigenous

Peoples, reconciliation, and systemic transformation. The Director of Indigenous Initiatives is responsible for facilitating the advancement of the IERM recommendations, embedding Indigenous-informed approaches across regulatory functions, and ensuring alignment with the Law Society's Strategic Plan.

8. The core job responsibilities of the Director of Indigenous Initiatives include:
 - **Strategic Leadership and Systemic Transformation**
 - Guiding IERM implementation across all departments
 - Integrating Indigenous worldviews, laws, and relational principles into regulatory processes
 - Leading the Journey of Practice
 - Chairing the Internal Working Group
 - **Relationship-Building with Indigenous Organizations**
 - Engagement with Indigenous justice partners, Nations, and community leadership ensures the Law Society's work is grounded in respect, reciprocity, and long-term collaboration.
 - **Cultural Safety and Organizational Learning**
 - Delivering the Journey of Practice
 - Supporting trauma-informed approaches
 - Guiding the application of the Indigenous Lens Framework
 - **Early Inclusion and Advisory Role**
 - Ensuring Indigenous Initiatives is engaged at the beginning of regulatory, policy, and governance processes.
 - **Accountability and Reporting**
 - Monitoring progress on IERM implementation
 - Supporting the Annual Reconciliation Report
 - Ensuring alignment with Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Law Society's Strategic Plan
9. This role ensures that the Law Society does not walk ahead of Indigenous partners, nor behind them, but alongside them - in good relation.

Review of Current Practice

10. Since commencing my role as the Director of Indigenous Initiatives, I have reviewed the Law Society's current practices to gain a clear picture of where the Law Society currently stands on

its path to reconciliation and the implementation of the IERM recommendations, and related efforts. My review reflects observations gathered through listening, document review, and engagement with staff and leadership. The purpose of the review was to identify structural patterns that affect continuity, alignment, and the ability to advance reconciliation as a sustained organizational practice. The findings highlight areas of strength, areas requiring attention and improvement, and opportunities to embed reconciliation in a manner consistent with Indigenous worldviews, the IERM recommendations, and the Law Society's strategic commitments.

The Importance of Continuity

11. Continuity of work, measuring and assessing progress, ensuring consistency of implementation, and demonstrating accountability of internal and public commitments are vital in order to strengthen structural practices and embed reconciliation in the fabric of the Law Society.
12. The newly established IERM internal working group will help build on these efforts by strengthening continuity, documentation, and institutional memory going forward. Accountability for the ongoing work will also be improved, by the establishment of this dedicated group of staff from a range of different departments, who will jointly be responsible for progressing this work together with the Director of Indigenous Initiatives.

Building Sustained Practices

13. Organizations that approach Indigenous initiatives primarily as a check-box and compliance-based exercise face several risks, including reputational harm, misalignment with public commitments, loss of trust with Indigenous partners, inconsistent regulatory practices, and challenges in meeting obligations under UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action. In order for the Law Society to avoid this pitfall and to ensure its efforts are translated into sustained practice and a way of being in our everyday work, there is more work to be done.
14. The intention of reconciliation is to embed it as a sustained, relational, and practice-based way of working - a daily discipline rooted in relationship, accountability, and respect, consistent with Indigenous worldviews and the spirit of the IERM recommendations. Rather than one-time training, compliance activities, awareness-based sessions, and symbolic gestures, to advance authentic commitment to reconciliation, the next phase of work will focus on shifting from task-based activities to practice-based engagement that is integrated into governance, operations, and professional culture.

Inclusion Early and Often

15. It is important that Indigenous engagement be integrated at the beginning of processes, on an ongoing basis throughout the development of initiatives, and as part of decision-making.

16. An embedded approach to Indigenous engagement, and incorporating internal review and feedback, early and often will improve the effectiveness and integrity of the work.

The Journey of Practice

17. The Journey of Practice is a learning pathway for the Law Society to live its commitments to Indigenous Peoples. It is intended to move the organization from cultural awareness to a point of embedding an Indigenous lens within the policies, services and activities of the Law Society on a daily basis. This journey involves shifting to a more relational practice, which means a person-centred approach with strong and respectful relationships at its core. All engagement, whether it be internal or external will be done with purpose, kindness and reciprocity.

Awareness → Practice
Policy → Relationship
Intention → Daily action

18. It is not training. It is a **way of working**.

Structure of the Journey

19. Customized sessions will be delivered by Indigenous trainers for Benchers, senior leadership, management and staff in separate groups.
20. These sessions will build relational capacity, cultural humility and an understanding of Indigenous law and skills for integrating Indigenous engagement into regulatory work.

Experiential Workshops

21. Experiential workshops are planned for National Indigenous Peoples Day and Orange Shirt Day in 2026. These interactive workshops provide embodied learning experiences that deepen understanding and support cultural and relational transformation.

Internal Working Group

22. A cross-departmental advisory internal working group structure has been developed in order to:
- Align the Strategic Plan with the IERM;
 - Integrate Indigenous engagement into policies, procedures, and regulatory functions;
 - Support staff in moving from awareness to practice; and
 - Ensure continuity and accountability.

23. This group will serve as the operational engine of the Journey of Practice.

Alignment with Strategic Plan and IERM Recommendations

24. The Journey of Practice directly supports:

- Strategic Plan commitments to equity, reconciliation, and regulatory excellence;
- IERM recommendations for relational engagement, cultural safety, and systemic change; and
- Organizational goals related to public confidence, fairness, and accountability.

25. This alignment ensures that Indigenous engagement is not parallel work - it is **core** work.

Progress to Date

26. Since joining the Law Society in September 2025, I have had the opportunity to complete or advance the following initiatives:

- Assisted in the planning and delivery of the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Task Force (“BHDTF”) symposium;
- Delivered a Cultural Safety presentation to BHDTF;
- Delivered a relational presentation to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT);
- Designed the Journey of Practice which is a pathway for the Law Society to practice reconciliation everyday, in all that it does;
- Initiated an internal working group to implement existing IERM Report commitments and to coordinate initiatives going forward;
- Initiated relationship-building with staff;
- Identified gaps in Indigenous relations continuity;
- Developed an employment framework to increase Indigenous representation and retention at the Law Society;
- Began aligning reconciliation work with the IERM recommendations and the Law Society’s Strategic Plan; and
- Commenced the integration of relational care into internal processes.

27. These activities will establish a strong foundation for the next phase of the work.

Historical Materials Review and Ethical Stewardship

28. In alignment with the Journey of Practice and the Law Society’s commitment to relational, accountable, and culturally safe approaches, Indigenous Initiatives has begun collaborating with Privacy, Records and Information Management on two projects involving historical materials and representation. These initiatives demonstrate how the Journey of Practice is being applied beyond learning sessions and into daily decision-making, stewardship, and institutional accountability.

Indigenous Library Review: Thomas King Titles

29. Following the public confirmation that author Thomas King falsely claimed Indigenous identity, Indigenous Initiatives has initiated a review of his works currently housed in the Indigenous Library. The purpose of this review is to ensure accuracy, integrity, and cultural safety in how Indigenous knowledge and authorship are represented within the Law Society.
30. In collaboration with Records and Information Management, the proposed approach includes:
- removing Thomas King’s books from the Indigenous-authored section;
 - reclassifying them under a category that accurately reflects authorship;
 - adding contextual catalogue notes; and
 - prioritizing authentic Indigenous authors in future acquisitions.
31. This work reflects the Journey of Practice by moving from awareness to practice, ensuring that Indigenous representation is upheld with care, accuracy, and relational accountability.

Veterans’ Plaque and Historical Logo Contextualization

32. A second project involves the review of historical materials that were removed in an effort to eliminate the former Law Society logo associated with the monarchy. This included the removal of a plaque honouring First and Second World War veterans.
33. Through the lens of the Journey of Practice, the focus is not solely on whether the plaque should be displayed, but on how the Law Society can steward its history with honesty, transparency, and relational care. Indigenous Initiatives has recommended reinstating the plaque with an interpretive layer that:
- explains the history of the former logo;
 - provides context for its removal;
 - acknowledges the Law Society’s evolving commitments;
 - honours the veterans named on the plaque; and
 - transforms the piece into an educational tool.
34. This approach aligns with reconciliation principles by acknowledging complexity rather than erasing history, and by modelling responsible truth-telling and institutional accountability.

Connection to the Journey of Practice

35. Both initiatives demonstrate the Law Society’s shift:
- from symbolic action to sustained relational practice;
 - from transactional decisions to thoughtful, contextual stewardship;
 - from awareness to daily action; and
 - from isolated tasks to integrated, values-aligned processes.

36. These projects show how the Journey of Practice is becoming a living framework that guides not only learning and engagement, but also the Law Society's stewardship of knowledge, history, and relationships.

IERM Updates

37. In 2021, the Law Society established the IERM Task Force with a mandate to examine the Law Society's regulatory processes, specifically its complaints, investigation, prosecution and adjudication processes, as they relate to complainants and witnesses, particularly Indigenous persons, who may be experiencing vulnerability or marginalization.

38. While my position of Director of Indigenous Initiatives was not in place for the majority of 2025, I am pleased to share a summary of key actions taken on the IERM recommendations to December 2025.

Decolonize and Indigenize (Recommendation 1 & 2)

Indigenous Navigator

39. The Indigenous Navigator has been offering supports to Indigenous complainants and when offered, they have accepted. The Indigenous Navigator has met with complainants in person or she will join calls and video conferences with them as a support. Indigenous complainants have commented that they would not have proceeded with the complaint without the support of the Indigenous Navigator.

40. The position of Indigenous Navigator is attached to the Law Society's trauma-informed practices, and she has collaborated with counsel involved with the Alternative Discipline Process (ADP) on the recommendations for lawyers. The Indigenous Navigator has been part of the resolution of complaints for non-Indigenous lawyers who require cultural sensitivity skills. In some cases, the Indigenous Navigator will work with Indigenous lawyers and lawyers trained in trauma-informed practice from other provinces to support the complainant.

41. Internally at the Law Society, the services of this new role of Indigenous Navigator are being requested by other departments such as Unauthorized Practice. The Indigenous Navigator has been instrumental in connecting Indigenous individuals with various supports in the community such as the First Nation administration, mental health supports, housing providers and case workers.

42. If the complaint does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Law Society, the Indigenous Navigator will customize or personalize the closing letters and she also takes the time to call the complainant to explain the process and why it was closed.

Training and Learning

43. All existing staff have completed the on-line, six-hour Indigenous Intercultural Course and all new staff must take the training within first three months of hiring. As referenced earlier, going forward, an entire suite of training and learning opportunities has been developed for senior leaders and Benchers, and opportunities for management and staff will be informed by the Internal Working Group.
44. The LSBC Tribunal continues to make available to all adjudicators an Indigenous-led course regarding Indigenous trauma and equity informed practices. The LSBC Tribunal has developed “Guidelines for Indigenous Proceedings”. The LSBC Tribunal’s 2026 Annual Education Conference will focus on the “Guidelines for Indigenous Proceedings”. The Tribunal has retained an Indigenous lawyer, Halie (Kwanxwa’logwa) Bruce to assist in the finalizing of those guidelines.

Sharing

45. Staff participants in the Pulling Together Canoe Journey did a special presentation and told personal stories about their experiences at the Summer 2025 All-staff Townhall. Stories and photos about the Canoe Journey experience were also shared externally and internally through communication channels and in the Annual Report.
46. From a Communications perspective, ways to advance cultural safety, minimize formalities and ensure content is in plain language are routinely considered, particularly on the public-facing sections of the website.
47. We have made progress in continually reviewing and making changes to website content, imagery, videos, etc. Due to the ever-evolving content on the website and our own ongoing learning, this work is considered ongoing.
48. On the 8th floor of the Law Society offices, an Indigenous Library was launched in late 2024 and a new book is featured/promoted every month in the internal newsletter.

Build Trusting Relationships (Recommendation 3)

49. The Indigenous Navigator has engaged with several external Indigenous organizations to discuss and learn about barriers and solutions about navigating the Tribunal process or the legal system generally. The Indigenous Navigator has visited all Indigenous Justice Centres in BC as well as First Nation courts. She has also attended Indigenous conferences and provided verbal and written information about the Law Society to small groups at Indigenous community hubs. The numerous engagements in the province have assisted the Indigenous Navigator in creating new or strengthening existing relationships.

50. With respect to assisting Indigenous hearing participants, the Indigenous Navigator often recognizes that social supports are needed or requested and, in those cases, she has been connecting with the First Nation communities and guiding or referring Indigenous complainants to use any available resources locally or within their community.
51. A new role called the Indigenous Engagement Coordinator has been created and is currently posted. This position will report to the Director of Indigenous Initiatives. A comprehensive Indigenous Engagement Strategy will be developed in 2026.
52. The Law Society launched Apology Guidelines on its website in 2025. The Apology Guidelines apply to the Law Society's investigation and discipline processes. They were created to help lawyers and legal professionals apologize to clients for conduct that may occur in the practice of law.

Prevention of Harm (Recommendation 4)

53. Through planned engagement with Indigenous organizations in 2026, the Law Society will explore ways to develop or improve positive professional relationships with Indigenous clients.

Implementation (Recommendation 5)

54. As referenced earlier, due to the collective accountability for the implementation of the IERM recommendations, we will be launching an internal working group to implement existing commitments and to coordinate initiatives going forward. This working group will be organized and facilitated by the Director of Indigenous Initiatives.

Conclusion

55. The Law Society has made significant commitments to Indigenous peoples, reconciliation, and systemic transformation. To honour these commitments, we must move beyond symbolic actions and into sustained relational practice. The Journey of Practice provides the structure, guidance, and relational grounding needed to support this transformation.

56. Going forward, we will:

1. Adopt the Journey of Practice as the Law Society's learning and relational framework;
2. Establish the internal working group as a formal structure;
3. Facilitate access to all existing documentation related to Indigenous engagement;
4. Ensure early inclusion of Indigenous Initiatives in all relevant processes;
5. Support the development of a comprehensive, relational workplan; and
6. Regularly report to the Benchers on our efforts in order to ensure transparency and alignment.

57. I look forward to continuing this work in partnership with leadership, staff, and the Benchers.