

Approval Authority: Board of Governors

Last Approved: June 11, 2026

Administrative Responsibility: President

Next Review: 2027-2028

PURPOSE

“...these stories, this language, these ways, and this land are the only valuables we can give you, but life is in them for those who know how to ask and how to learn...” (Cajete, 1994)

The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is an Indigenous public post-secondary institution whose identity, purpose, and daily practices are guided by the teachings of Elders. This policy affirms that Elders and the Elders’ Council are central to how NVIT understands leadership, learning, governance, and community responsibility.

At NVIT, policy provides structure, but protocols bring life. Through language, stories, relationships, and connection to land, Elders guide NVIT in living its Vision, Mission, and Values in a good way. Their teachings remind us that values are not statements to be referenced only in documents, but responsibilities to be carried in how we speak, listen, decide, and act.

Through ongoing dialogue with Elders, NVIT has been guided by the concepts of **éxʷíplaʔtn** and **ciyus da’a** (Syilx and Nlaka’pamux respectively), describing ways of being grounded in identity, accountability, and relationship. This policy recognizes those teachings as living guidance that informs institutional decision-making and everyday practice.

ELDERS’ COUNCIL COMPOSITION

NVIT shall maintain an Elders’ Council that reflects its responsibilities to community and learners. Membership will include:

- Representation from NVIT’s founding First Nations;
- Elders from other Indigenous communities connected to NVIT learners and campuses;
- Métis representation, where appropriate.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Elders contribute to NVIT in diverse and interrelated ways. Their roles are guided by invitation, consent, and cultural protocol.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Elders may:

- Provide cultural, spiritual, emotional, and personal support to students;
- Participate in talking circles, ceremonies, and traditional practices;
- Support Indigenous learner transitions, retention, and overall well-being.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

When invited, Elders may:

- Share teachings, stories, and land-based knowledge within classrooms and programs;
- Support curriculum development and the respectful integration of Indigenous knowledge systems;
- Participate as guest teachers or co-teachers in culturally appropriate ways.

INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

Elders may:

- Provide guidance to senior leadership and the Board of Governors;
- Advise on Indigenous protocols, cultural safety, and ethical decision-making;
- Support reflection on how NVIT's Vision, Mission, and Values are being lived institutionally.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL LIFE

Elders may:

- Support orientations, graduations, and significant institutional events;
- Guide territorial acknowledgements and ceremonial practices;
- Strengthen relationships between NVIT and Indigenous communities.

ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOLS

NVIT will designate appropriate staff support to coordinate Elder engagement, communication, scheduling, and follow-up.

HONOURARIA AND SUPPORT

Elders shall receive honoraria that reflect the value of their time, knowledge, and responsibilities.

Honoraria may vary depending on:

- Teaching and classroom engagement;
- Ceremonial roles;
- Governance and advisory participation;
- Travel, preparation, and community obligations.

NVIT will recognize Elders through the following:

- \$250 per half day;
- \$500 per full day.

NVIT ELDERS' PROTOCOLS – LIVING GUIDANCE

The following protocols are teachings shared by NVIT Elders to guide how NVIT's Vision, Mission, and Values are lived in daily practice. These protocols are living guidance rather than prescriptive rules. They call on personal responsibility, reflection, and respect.

OUR FOUNDATION

Vision

yaheʔtaí ~ ʔstcawt

Our spirit, essence, emotions, and intelligence are good.

Mission

sləqməyt ~ nakʷuləmnt

We commit ourselves to sharing our traditional ways.

Values

1. *zəʔʷzo ʔwt ~ kʷckʷact* – Strength
2. *nkseytkn ~ nəqsílt* – The All / The People You Travel With
3. *sneʔm ~ məyntwíxʷ* – Song / Spirit
4. *qʷəmqaʷəmt ~ qʷaʔ qʷaʔnt* – Balance / Beauty

1. *zəʔʷzo ʔwt ~ kʷckʷact* – Strength

Living the Value: Communicate with clarity, rigour, and respect for many ways of knowing.

Elder Teachings: “Walk tall – we are strong.” Strength comes from knowing who you are and carrying that knowledge with humility.

- Walk tall and be proud of who you are, not what you are.
- Work hard, set expectations, and raise the bar for ourselves and our learners.
- Endure challenges; resilience is part of strength.
- Listen to stories - within them live wisdom, healing, and understanding.

2. nkseytkn ~ nąqsílt – The People You Travel With / The All

Living the Value: Honour community voices in decisions through relevance, reciprocity, and consensus.

Elder Teachings: “Recognise where I come from. Remember the ancestors.”

- Acknowledge others - a nod, a smile, a greeting.
- Remember where you come from and honour your ancestors.
- Forgive, stay in the room, and practice consensus.
- Carry and share your story - stories connect us to the People.

3. sneʔm ~ máytwíxʷ – Song / Spirit

Living the Value: Act with integrity, transparency, and follow-through.

Elder Teachings: Sometimes someone else helps you hear the song within you.

- Speak to your spirit each day.
- Make decisions that protect and nurture spirit.
- Help others care for their spirit.
- Choose teachings with discernment.
- When systems run smoothly, spirit and balance are present.

4. qʷəm qʷəmt ~ qʷam qʷamt – Balance / Beauty

Living the Value: Begin conversations and decisions by centering learners.

Elder Teachings: “Listen to the story.”

- Pride, confidence, and passion guide us.
- Leadership is energy that feels good, not forceful.
- Communication should foster peace, safety, and welcome.
- Create space for dynamic energy that strengthens and uplifts.

LIVING NATURE OF THE PROTOCOLS

These protocols are living teachings shared by NVIT Elders. They invite all members of the NVIT community to act with integrity, listen with respect, and carry responsibility for how our words and actions reflect NVIT’s Vision, Mission, and Values.

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