

Annual Review 2023/2024

BCNET



ABOUT BCNET

BCNET is a not-for-profit, collaborative organization that provides shared services tailored to the needs of its members: higher education and research institutions in B.C. We offer an array of technology solutions in networking, information and educational technology, cybersecurity, as well as procurement services to help members reduce costs, maximize efficiencies, enhance service quality, empower digital transformation, and support their missions.

EFFICIENCIES

Our collaborative approach to sourcing technology and other essential services and contracts helps reduce costs, minimize duplication, and streamline efficiencies.

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

We are committed to delivering service excellence that is responsive, reliable, and available to our members.

A CATALOGUE OF SERVICES

We offer an extensive catalogue of over 130 cost-effective technology products and services, and general/IT contracts.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

BCNET fosters a culture of inclusion, where everyone is welcomed and valued. We embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion as a source of our strength, allowing everyone to contribute and thrive.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The past year has been a period of significant growth and achievement for BCNET, and I am so pleased by the progress that is being made on the strategic priorities in enhancing member services, strengthening stakeholder relations, and advancing organizational development. The information you will read about in this annual review will highlight the countless hours of hard work and dedication from not only the BCNET staff, but from the entire member community.

We live in an ever-evolving digital world, making the work of BCNET possibly more important now than ever before. With the rise of AI, cybersecurity threats are posing entirely new challenges for everyone, adding layers of complexity to the work being done by our member organizations. That is why I am so pleased with the work of our community in enhancing the cybersecurity posture of the sector. BCNET is uniquely positioned to provide a space where our members can engage with one another and share their experiences, something that has resulted in initiatives that have strengthened the entire sector.

Our community has seen many big accomplishments this past year in cybersecurity, including participation in the National Cybersecurity Assessment, with a 92% participation rate. We also saw the introduction of our Cybersecurity Professional Services Roster, which has been a significant addition to our service offerings.

The Board of Directors continues to steer the 2022-2027 strategic priorities, enhancing the organization's performance and accomplishments.

We take extraordinary pride in BCNET's evolution and milestones, along with the substantial impact we are making by delivering exceptional value to the higher education sector in the midst of constant change. I believe that our success and resiliency is largely due to our member's dedication to one another, as well as to the mission, vision, and our core values (Collaborative, Innovative, Responsive). I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the Board for their dedication to the work being done at BCNET, and to the BCNET team itself for expertly delivering our priorities over the past year. Additionally, I offer my deepest thanks to each and every person who participated in our important service committees and working groups. Your support is invaluable to us.

Today, we are stronger than ever and better equipped for the future. I look forward to another year of shared success.



Jennifer Burns, Chair



I believe that our success and resiliency is largely due to our dedication to our members, as well as to the mission, vision, and our core values (Collaborative, Innovative, Responsive).

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we reflect on the past year, it is with immense pride and gratitude that I present our annual report, highlighting accomplishments and exciting milestones achieved by BCNET in 2023/24. This year, we maintained a strong trajectory of evolution and growth while staying focused on our core mission of delivering exceptional value through the collaborative spirit of our member community.

In 2024, we achieved a remarkable new milestone in spend growth of 13% in our services. This increase signifies that our members are realizing the rewards of collaborative services, efficient processes, and outstanding service value.

In alignment with our strategic priorities, we have reached a significant achievement in developing our network infrastructure with the inauguration of the seventh Transit Exchange in Nanaimo. Not only does the implementation of this new infrastructure ensure data sovereignty, it also adds an additional level of protection and risk mitigation in the face of the growing challenges posed by climate change. Together, we are providing a stronger, more resilient foundation for our Vancouver Island members and our entire network.

We welcomed a new member, Native Education College (NEC). NEC provides a culturally appropriate and supportive learning environment for Indigenous learners and are dedicated to building the Nations of tomorrow. By extending critical national and global research and education infrastructure to the College, we are fostering an inclusive and empowering educational landscape that celebrates and fosters the unique cultural perspectives and aspirations of Indigenous learners.

With cyber threats ever-present, we remain committed to enhancing the security posture of our members. In collaboration with CANARIE's National Cybersecurity Assessment initiative, we provided institutional, regional, and national reports to all participating members. These reports highlight opportunities for improvement and inform our cybersecurity roadmap.

This year, BCNET unveiled a sustainable procurement strategy—an innovative roadmap designed to harmonize our efforts and forge a path toward a more environmentally and socially responsible future. This strategy signals

our commitment to advance purchasing decisions that consider climate, social, ethical, and indigenous tenets to enhance the environment.

This past year has been nothing short of extraordinary, driven by the dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment of our phenomenal BCNET team. Their innovative ideas, collaborative spirit, and responsiveness to our members' needs have propelled us to new heights of success.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our Board of Directors for their invaluable guidance and insight. Your dedication to our mission and vision is the foundation of our success and inspires us all. I also want to extend my deepest gratitude to our members for their continued contributions. Each one of you play a crucial role in shaping the services we deliver.

As we look forward to new opportunities and challenges, we are confident that we will achieve new heights of success and impact with the continued support of our community.

Bala Kathiresan,
President & CEO

This past year has been nothing short of extraordinary, driven by the dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment of our phenomenal BCNET team.





THE YEAR IN REVIEW

MEASURING OUR SUCCESS

2023/24	\$151M (+13%)
2022/23	\$134M (+30%)
2021/22	\$103M (+27%)

GROWTH IN SECTORAL SPEND

13%

INCREASE IN SPEND

Our members are realizing the rewards of collaborative services, efficient processes, and outstanding service value.

\$151M

COLLABORATION SPEND

In 2023/24, we collaborated with stakeholders to expand our service portfolio and increase service adoption, resulting in a total spend of \$151 million.

25

PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION MEMBERS

27

RESEARCH & OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION MEMBERS



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, we continued to foster and facilitate opportunities for collaboration among institutions to help shape current and future technology and procurement services for B.C.'s public, post-secondary and research sector.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of our success. By fostering and nurturing partnerships, BCNET has cultivated a unique and trusted member community. We encourage member engagement through service-focused committees, working groups, communities of practice, member forums, and events. These community groups provide opportunities to learn from one another, share insights, and discover services and solutions to common challenges.

374

**MEMBERS FROM ACROSS
25 INSTITUTIONS IN B.C.
COLLABORATED AND
CONTRIBUTED TO BCNET
SERVICE COMMITTEES
AND WORKING GROUPS
FOCUSED ON A WIDE
RANGE OF SERVICES**



STRATEGIC ROADMAP

2022–2027

Our strategic roadmap guides our evolution and growth, purposefully setting priorities for the future. Now midway through the 2022/27 roadmap, we have made great progress on our priorities set out in the three pillars: member services, stakeholder relations, and organizational development.



MEMBER SERVICES

Network Services

Enhance the reliability, security, resilience, and capacity of the network to ensure our members can depend on this infrastructure and take advantage of evolving technologies.

Cybersecurity

Assist our members in achieving and sustaining an appropriate cybersecurity posture.

Shared Solutions

Advance the provision of, and value from, shared services and procurement.



STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

Resource Sharing and Collaboration

Enhance opportunities for collaboration, including facilitated sharing of resources.

Business Relationship Management

Evolve the account management function to expand how BCNET supports members' needs and expectations.



BCNET ORGANIZATION

Purposeful Growth

Put in place a framework for growth and expansion of services.

Talent Acquisition and Development

Recruit, develop and retain specialists in support of the member services and stakeholder relations priorities, notably those with expertise in cybersecurity and the network.

Results Oriented

Continue to track and report our performance with the view to demonstrating achievements in relation to the strategic priorities and value to the members.

NETWORK SERVICES

NETWORK SERVICES

BCNET Enhances Network Resilience with New Nanaimo Point-of-Presence

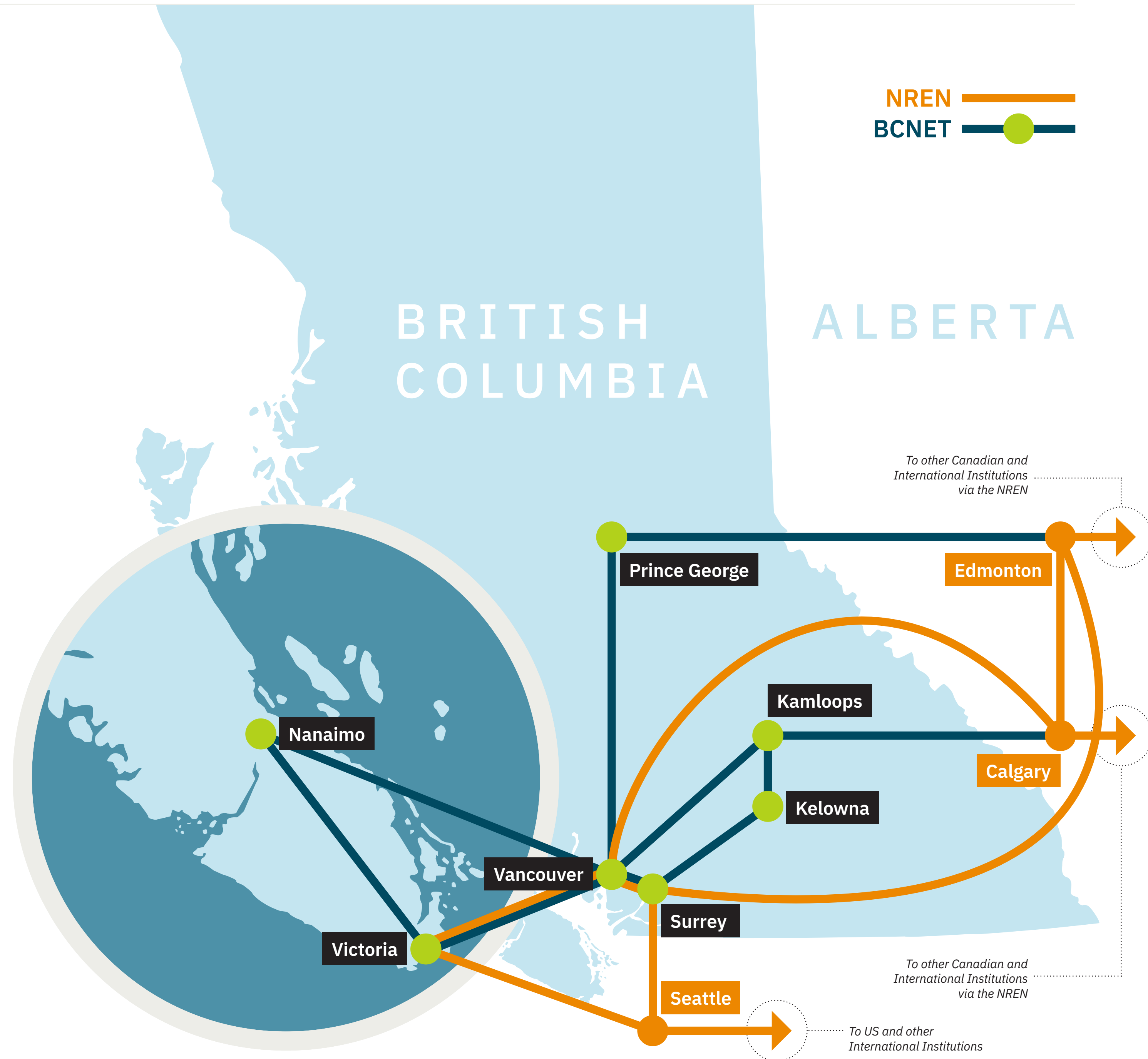
In 2024, we completed the Nanaimo Transit Exchange, our seventh Transit Exchange in the province.

By adding this new point-of-presence (POP), BCNET has improved the robustness of the network infrastructure for Vancouver Island. Members will retain more control over their data, experience fewer network disruptions, and benefit from an additional layer of risk mitigation for any potential environmental issues that may arise as a result of climate change.

Bala Kathiresan, President, and CEO of BCNET, expressed his satisfaction with this project, stating, "This latest development will enhance our network diversity and resilience between Vancouver Island and the Mainland, ensuring data sovereignty and continuity in the event of a crisis."

Kathiresan also highlighted the importance of collaboration in this project: "This achievement would not have been possible without the support of local municipalities. By leveraging their infrastructure, we have been able to enhance our network capabilities and extend our services more effectively."

As we celebrate the completion of The Nanaimo Transit Exchange, we acknowledge the collective effort that has brought us to this point. BCNET will continue to innovate and invest in the network, as per our strategic priorities, and explore new projects. We are working together to ensure that the evolving needs of our entire network are being met so they can remain at the forefront of technological advancements.



NETWORK SERVICES

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

99.9%

CORE NETWORK



NETWORK
SERVICE
UPTIME



100%

INTERNET TRANSIT



100%

CANADA'S NATIONAL
RESEARCH & EDUCATION
NETWORK

259,941,078 Gigabytes
of Traffic

AGGREGATE VOLUME OF NETWORK TRAFFIC FOR ALL MEMBERS

152

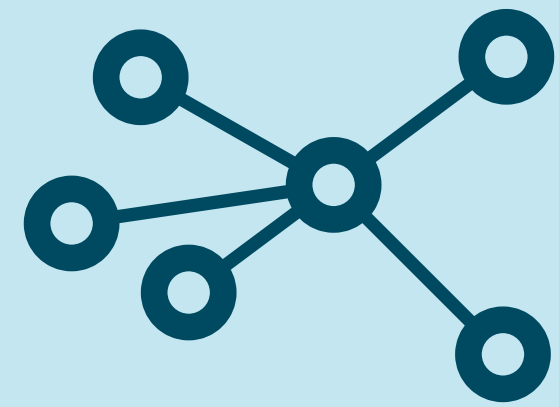
CAMPUS SITES AND RESEARCH
INSTITUTES CONNECT TO THE BCNET
ADVANCED NETWORK



NETWORK SERVICES

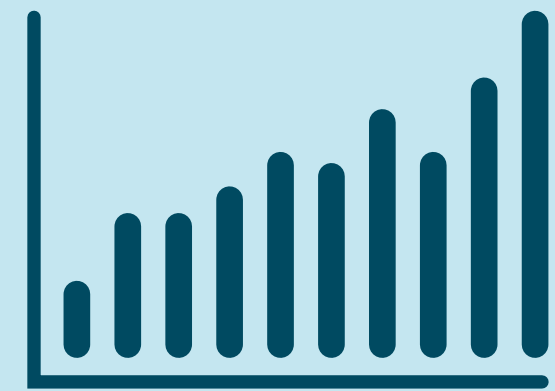
STRATEGIC PRIORITY

This year, BCNET significantly upgraded its digital infrastructure to ensure secure and resilient, ultra-high-speed, information networks and services tailored to the unique and mission-critical needs of universities, colleges, and research institutes in B.C.



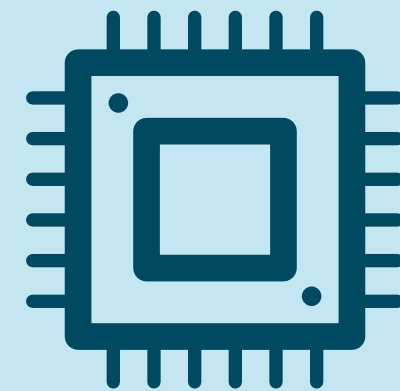
SUPPORTING MEMBER CONNECTIVITY

We prioritized new connections for members to support their expansion and renewed 52-member network circuits. Additionally, we were able to reduce the average campus connectivity costs by 14%.



100 GBPS UPGRADE TO PEERING PARTNERS

To keep pace with campus and research network growth, we upgraded our connection to the Vancouver Internet Exchange, taking it from 2 x 10 Gbps to 100 Gbps after a 50+ Gbps volumetric DDoS affected multiple members IX connectivity. This helps BCNET keep network traffic in BC.



NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Another priority this year was to support the National Research Education Network (NREN) to improve network performance and growth. We installed the NREN's first 400Gbps circuit, between Vancouver and Surrey in partnership with CANARIE.



RESOURCE PUBLIC KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

BCNET and NREN partners worked with their institutions to ensure their IP addresses were correctly registered by the end of 2023, preventing increased ARIN (American Registry for Internet Numbers) fees, and avoiding internet traffic disruptions.



BCNET RAISES THE BAR ON UPSTREAM CONNECTIVITY

With an increasing number of members on 10 Gbps campus connections, it was time to phase out all of the slower upstream connections. This year, we upgraded or replaced all the slower BCNET upstreams, making 10 Gbps the new minimum speed. We also added the first 100 Gbps Internet Transit upstream (Arelion AS1299).

PROCUREMENT SERVICES

PROCUREMENT SERVICES

Building a Sustainable Future Together Through Our Procurement Decisions

At BCNET, we recognize the far-reaching impact of our procurement decisions on the world we inhabit. With this understanding and awareness, we have embarked on a transformative journey to harness the collective strength of B.C.'s post-secondary institutions to create a strategy that meets the new sustainability standards while building on the collaborative spirit of the community we serve.

Ensuring a sustainable planet for future generations is one of our era's most significant challenges. In response, many of British Columbia's higher education institutions have taken action. By uniting these individual efforts into a collective initiative, we believe we can amplify our impact, significantly contributing to accelerated positive change.

The plan will build a long-lasting, high-impact program based on best practices that regularly incorporate sustainability into procurement decisions and foster collaboration with members.

It is incumbent on us to work collectively in reimagining environmentally sustainable and responsibly sourced solutions that are compliant with the trade treaties that guide our shared procurement actions.

A Collaborative Sustainable Procurement Strategy

BCNET has a proud legacy of bringing members together to take collective action. As we embark on tackling this challenge of our times, we invite each and every one of you to join us on this journey towards a future where procurement and sustainability seamlessly coexist.

"We are thrilled to announce the launch of our collective journey towards sustainability. Today, we proudly unveil our collaborative procurement sustainability strategy—an innovative roadmap designed to harmonize our efforts, elevate our impact, and forge a path toward a more environmentally and socially responsible future," says Dennis Silva, chief procurement officer at BCNET.

Institutions in British Columbia spend \$140 million annually on BCNET's procurement agreements and services, and each dollar can bring environmental, social, ethical, and Indigenous impacts.

Putting Commitment into Action

Our three-year strategy offers a bold vision for action on sustainability that guides how we are activating our mission: We are dedicated to driving positive change by fostering collaboration to promote sustainable procurement practices.

BCNET released its plan for the Sustainable Procurement Strategy in September 2023. The program is our commitment to catalyze change by building a high-performing program with clear goals, key priorities tactics and a three-year roadmap.

The plan's key priorities centre on the four pillars of environmental, social, ethics and Indigenous. By focusing on a sustainable procurement program that prioritizes these pillars, we can develop capacity to meet our member's sustainability objectives.

The plan will build a long-lasting, high-impact program based on best practices that regularly incorporate sustainability into procurement decisions and foster collaboration with members. It will also report on program outcomes and measure meaningful, positive impact. Together, we can build a legacy of responsible and ethical procurement that reflects our shared values and aspirations.

Sustainable Procurement Goals

"BCNET's commitment to the initiative will bring incredible value to its members by enhancing its service offerings to address their needs. Sustainable procurement is critical for higher education institutions to fulfill their environmental and social responsibilities, achieve long-term cost savings, and meet the expectations of stakeholders and Indigenous partners."

Dan Ryan, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Northern British Columbia



PROCUREMENT SERVICES

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

2024 Procurement Services Member Satisfaction Survey Results

MEMBERS' OVERALL RATINGS OF BCNET PROCUREMENT SERVICES

94%
EXCELLENT +
VERY GOOD + GOOD

94%
AGREE
Procurement helps save time and administrative effort.

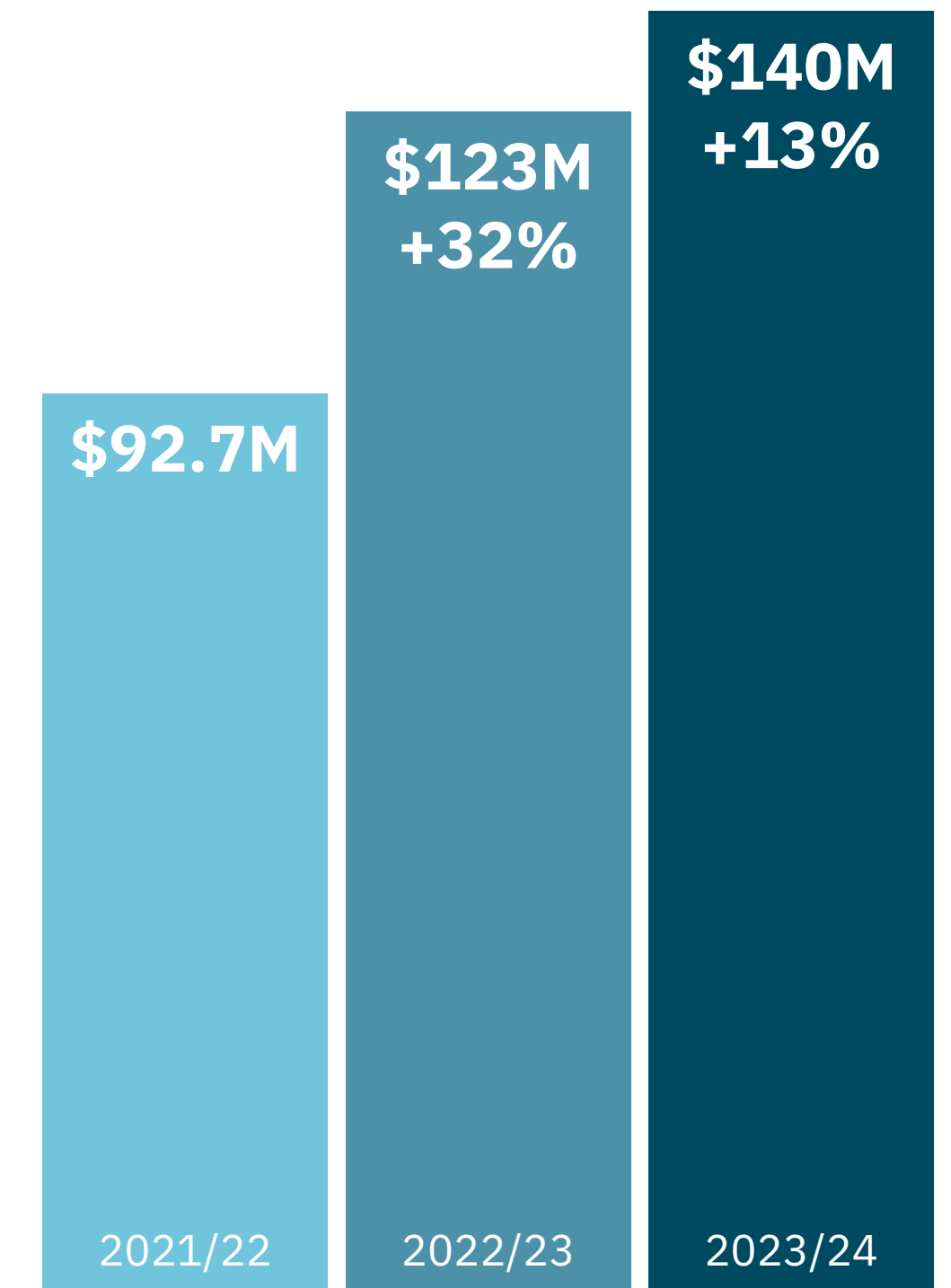
89%
AGREE
BCNET effectively identifies useful procurement opportunities.

The Collaborative Spend Measures the Extent of Participation and Support from BCNET's Members

NUMBER OF AGREEMENTS

132
ACTIVE PROCUREMENT AGREEMENTS

16
The team successfully introduced **16** new agreements and renewed **46** existing ones in 2023/24.



GROWTH IN PROCUREMENT SPEND

PROCUREMENT SERVICES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

We experienced another remarkable year, achieving an impressive 15% growth in spend. Our year-over-year spend growth demonstrates our commitment to delivering exceptional value and facilitating opportunities across a wide range of categories for the entire sector.

Through consistent collaboration and engagement with members, stakeholders, and suppliers, Procurement Services innovates to provide solutions and options that meet the diverse needs of our members. Currently, members benefit from 115 active information technology and general agreements that help save time and administrative effort, minimize supply disruptions, promote environmentally sustainable products, and reduce both direct and indirect costs.



59

MEMBERS PARTICIPATED
IN PROCUREMENT
SERVICE COMMITTEES
AND WORKING GROUPS

20

MEMBER
SERVICE REVIEW
MEETINGS

163

MEMBERS
PARTICIPATED AT
PROCUREMENT
MEMBER FORUMS



CYBERSECURITY SERVICES

CYBERSECURITY SERVICES

BCNET provides a portfolio of best-in-class services and solutions that keep our members' data, networks and reputation secure.

Cybersecurity is a Key Strategic Priority

Our cybersecurity collaboration initiative provides unparalleled leadership and expert security advice. Through unique access to a cooperative community both provincially and nationally, members can engage with peers, share expertise, and help shape the evolution of initiatives that fortify the entire sector. Members not only have access to a range of cybersecurity services but also can contribute to and benefit from a community-driven approach to cybersecurity.

Cybersecurity Professional Services Roster

We introduced the Cybersecurity Professional Services Roster, offering members access to 11 pre-qualified security professionals with diverse expertise, covering threat and risk assessments, incident response planning and testing, enterprise governance, forensic services, and breach response coaching.

29 Member Institutions participated in the National Cybersecurity Assessment

This year we collaborated with 29 members to support their participation in CANARIE's National Cybersecurity Assessment, an annual, comprehensive evaluation of security capabilities and capacities. We delivered customized National Cybersecurity Assessment reports to 29 post-secondary institutions and research institutes.

The goal was to:

- identify their maturity relative to their peers
- identify common, sector-wide strengths and priorities for support
- detect cybersecurity gaps at the regional and national levels
- inform their institution's cybersecurity plans and investment strategies.



CYBERSECURITY SERVICES

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

COLLABORATION

134

Members actively engaged in cybersecurity committees and working groups contributing their own expertise and helping to shape the evolution of initiatives that strengthen the whole sector

PARTICIPATION

60%

of members participate in BCNET SIEM service providing robust protection through real-time monitoring, efficient threat detection and response, regulatory compliance, and improved incident management

CYBERSECURITY OUTREACH

130

Post-secondary governors and senior administrators participated in a one-day forum on Cybersecurity Risk Management Forum

11

Cybersecurity Speaking Sessions contributed by members for the 2024 BCNET CONNECT Tech Summit bringing together over 600 attendees

3

Cybersecurity workshops with **39** attendees

NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY ASSESSMENT

an annual, comprehensive evaluation of security capabilities and capacities

92%

of PSI members and



67%

of research & other higher education members participated in the National Cybersecurity Assessment resulting in



13.5%

improvement in the security posture of participants

SHARED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

SHARED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

BCNET offers a comprehensive range of Shared Technology Solutions, featuring 21 services in areas such as information technology, enterprise resource planning, and teaching and learning.



We facilitated member collaboration on current and future ERP solutions

113

STAFF FROM PSIs
COLLABORATED ON ERP
SERVICE DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH 4 BANNER &
COLLEAGUE SERVICE
COMMITTEES

65

MEMBERS
(BANNER
FINANCIAL AID
CONSORTIUM)

18

MEMBERS
(BANNER
SERVICE
COMMITTEE)

20

MEMBERS
(COLLEAGUE
SERVICE
COMMITTEE)

10

(COLLEAGUE
SECURITY
SERVICE
COMMITTEE)

SHARED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

A Modern Video Platform for Students, Faculty, and IT

BCNET has secured a sector-wide agreement for Kaltura's Cloud and Web Conferencing solution, a centralized and fully customizable video-hosting hub now embraced by 80% of PSI members. This cutting-edge service equips students and faculty with a state-of-the-art video platform for both synchronous and asynchronous learning, dramatically enhancing the digital education experience while significantly reducing IT costs.

In a move to further empower our member community, BCNET and Kaltura hosted EmpowerEDDay—an in-person, one-day event where 60% of participating members converged to share insights and knowledge. The event showcased a visionary product roadmap and featured dynamic user roundtable discussions, driving innovation and collaboration within the sector.

193,250

STUDENTS AND FACULTY ACCESS KALTURA VIDEO-HOSTING HUB

19,462

STAFF ARE SUPPORTED BY TEAMDYNAMIX

A SaaS-based IT service management, project portfolio management, and integration platform

334

LIVE DIGITAL DISPLAYS AT 11 INSTITUTIONS UTILIZE TELEMETRYTV'S DIGITAL SIGNAGE SOLUTION

13.6

PETABYTES OF PRE-COMPRESSED DATA IS STORED IN THE EDUCLOUD BACKUP SERVICE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

In 2023/24, we further improved access to IT professional development and skills training by organizing third-party courses for our members. This year, we facilitated training for 109 individuals from member institutions, research institutes, and other higher education organizations.

109

IT PROFESSIONALS
TRAINED

3

NEW TRAINING
COURSES OFFERED

10

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COURSES DELIVERED

33

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
PARTICIPATED IN BCNET'S
TRAINING OFFERINGS

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

BCNET CONNECT SUMMIT



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

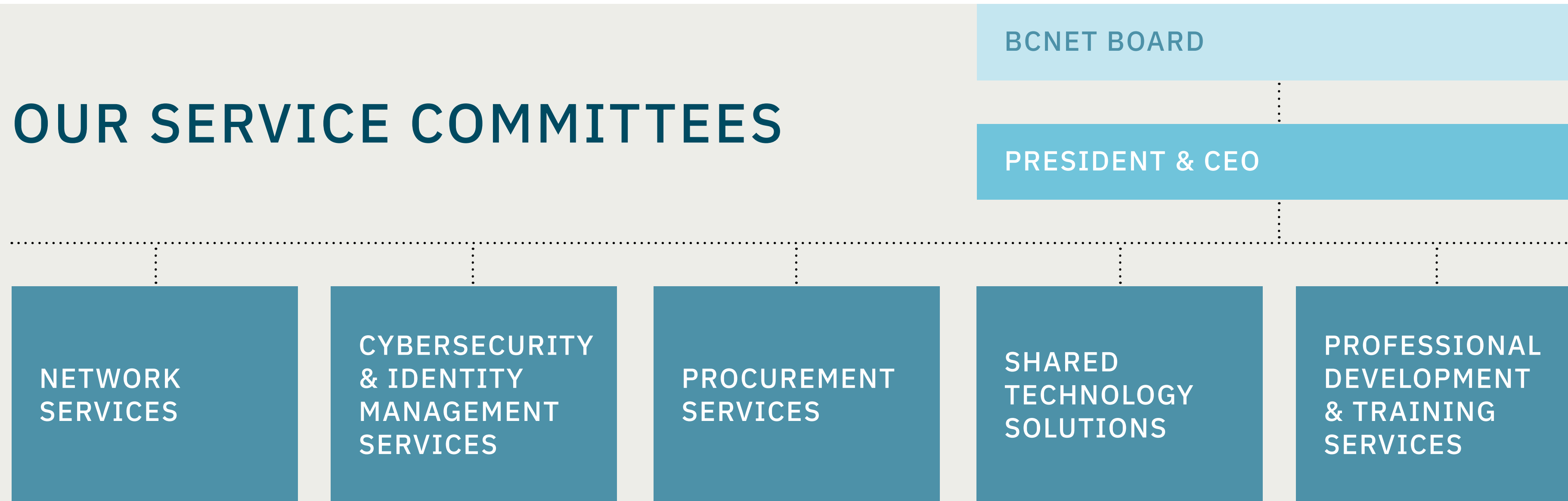
A key priority for BCNET in 2023/24 is to enhance member relations by deepening connections with our stakeholders. We remain dedicated to delivering exceptional service value by engaging with individuals across the public, post-secondary and research sectors.

Our Member Engagement and Communications Team concentrated on relationship development through one-on-one client service and annual review meetings allowing for in-depth discussions. These interactions allowed us to address members' needs, secure feedback, identify opportunities, and build future success.

Members also volunteer their time in our Service Committees to identify new services and challenges, develop best practices, engage in important discussions, share insights, and support the sector. Our success is made possible by the dedicated efforts of these committees.

600
MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN 6 MEMBER FORUMS & WEBINAR EVENTS

OUR SERVICE COMMITTEES



58
MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN OUR SERVICE COMMITTEES

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

HOW WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

Outreach & Events

BCNET fosters member engagement through in-person events allowing a wide range of member stakeholders to network, knowledge-share and learn from each other. In 2023/24, we held the CONNECT Tech Summit, six member forums, one cybersecurity event and a member holiday party.

BCNET Connect, Higher Ed Tech Summit

From April 3 to 5, 2024, we hosted our 24th Annual CONNECT Tech Summit at the Vancouver Sheraton Wall Centre drawing over 730 technology professionals from B.C.'s higher education and research institutions, alongside top-tier technology innovators. This dynamic event brought together a diverse member community, fostering invaluable networking and the exchange of ideas to transform teaching, learning, and research.

Cybersecurity Risk Management Forum

One of the most challenging and rapidly evolving issues facing higher education boards and senior leaders is cybersecurity risk management. To address this challenge, BCNET hosted an engaging half-day forum that delved into the latest developments in cybersecurity, equipping senior administrators with the knowledge and strategies needed to effectively prepare for the inevitability of a cyber incident.

730

DELEGATES

99.5%

RECOMMEND THE SUMMIT

97%

SATISFIED WITH THE SUMMIT

95%

SATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF PROGRAM CONTENT

“One of the best conferences of the year. Enjoy the networking and the content of the sessions!”

“I strongly commend BCNET for hosting the Risk Management Forum. It was phenomenal.”

130

ATTENDEES INCLUDING PRESIDENTS, GOVERNORS, SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS & CIOS

100%

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT THE FORUM WAS VALUABLE

NATIVE EDUCATION COLLEGE WHERE LEARNERS BECOME LEADERS

Empowering Indigenous Learners Through Education

For many Indigenous learners, Native Education College has given them something even better than a degree: it has ignited their dreams.

For the past 55 years, NEC has become a springboard for Indigenous learners, offering in equal measure academics and holistic learning that respects their spiritual and cultural needs.

Everyone has a dream, and a goal for themselves, but they often don't know where to get on the pathway to successful journeys," said NEC president Tammy Harkey, a Musqueam Indian Band member. "And that is one of the things that we are recognized here for—that we look at the holistic well-being of the learner and we help them ignite their dreams."

NEC focuses on inviting Indigenous learners to "bring their whole selves into

the learning environment," Harkey said, "and not asking them to compromise or leave parts of their selves at the door, which typically happens to an Indigenous learner when they enter a Western classroom."

Besides academics, the college gives equal weight to the connection to identity, culture, ceremony—an equation that has helped to bring peace to many of their learners.

"We're trying to retain that uniqueness and not relinquish it," Harkey said. "Our success is built around that uniqueness which honours the holistic well-being of each and every learner and recognizing that those learners come from families; and those families are situated in unique First Nation communities across the province."

For many Indigenous learners, Native Education College has given them something even better than a degree: it has ignited their dreams.

Serving a Distinct Need

NEC serves a distinct demographic: a vulnerable population that may have suffered trauma or negative experiences in elementary and high school and "needs a place to sort of rebuild themselves," Harkey said. "It's a little bit of a sad story that they often don't feel human," she said. "That's a really powerful statement to say, 'come to the door, you don't have that basic right to be perceived and seen and treated like a human being.'"

NEC's Impact

As such, NEC's curriculum focuses on the specific needs of First Nations. On their first day, learners are offered a traditional protocol and welcome ceremony at the Longhouse – by name and nation so they know who they are and where they came from.

Harkey said this "puts out a shared responsibility of our commitment to honour that person as they come through the doors."

Support services are also available, including a meal program, cultural coordinator, Elders in Residents, counsellors, and a spirit room where learners can access traditional medicines and protocols.

All of this helps to ignite the education journey – and break a cycle persistent among First Nations learners. Harkey, for instance, was the first in her family to go to post-secondary after she enrolled at NEC for the Early Childhood Education program. It wasn't an option for her mother, a residential school survivor, but her daughters are now both PhD candidates.

A significant number of other NEC learners have transferred to post-secondary institutions, taking up careers in law or becoming chiefs.

Powerful alumni include Melanie Mark, B.C.'s first Indigenous female Member of the Legislative Assembly and Tamara Starblanket, a lawyer and author of her forthcoming book: *Suffer the Little Children – Genocide: Indigenous Nations in the Canadian State*

“That’s the immediate ripple effect of our community and family success at the NEC,” Harkey said. “But it also creates role models in community so other women can reach out to humans like myself or Tamara Starblanket or others that are out there.”

NEC’s goal is to support the advancement of learners and build capacity so the nations themselves can be self-governing, training their members to fulfill the labor market within their own communities.

Times are Changing

Although NEC has been self-funded for 55 years, through various fundraising efforts and grant writing, it is now in transition as it seeks to modernize its campus and technology and become more sustainable.

“We try to make sure our Indigenous learners have equal access to an equal playing field as their non-Indigenous counterparts but one look at our campus and you realize we’re working with some

quite outdated resources,” Harkey said.

NEC Joins BCNET Membership

NEC joined BCNET becoming a new member, which provides them access to a catalogue of member-centric services in information and educational technology, enterprise resource planning, advanced networks, cybersecurity and procurement services. Information sharing is another big driver.

Bala Kathiresan, BCNET’s president and CEO, said bringing NEC into the fold creates value to all its members: “By welcoming NEC as a participant in the higher education and research community in B.C., everyone benefits,” he said. “It opens access to a powerful learning community of institutions big and small with unique skillsets that can learn from one another.”

Harkey is excited about the potential advantages but notes NEC’s original mandate will drive their way forward.

“Holding on to what's most dear to our elders and our knowledge-keepers is that the transfer of that identity and knowing who we are and where we come from.”



DEAN CRAWFORD

Champion, Olympian, and Friend | December 6, 2023

In memory of Dean Crawford whose radiant spirit, unmatched dedication, and pursuit of excellence left an indelible mark on our hearts, our organization, and the higher education and research community.

Dean's family honoured his memory by directing contributions to the Youth Futures Education Fund in lieu of flowers.



We are Making a Difference through the Youth Futures Education Fund

When more people have access to higher education, the entire community benefits. That's why we are committed to supporting youth education, helping those in need and making a difference in the sector in which we serve.

About Youth Futures

The Youth Futures Education Fund helps create equal educational opportunities for young adults who have been in government care. At the age of 19, youth in care “age out” of the foster care system and subsequently lose all support from their foster families, social workers, and government programs. Although they are eligible for a tuition waiver, the loss of this assistance makes pursuing post-secondary education much more challenging.



BCNET

HEADQUARTERS

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