In September 2018, 26 students entered the inaugural class of a joint degree program in the Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders at the University of Victoria (JD/JID) Canada. The program was the culmination of some 14 years of planning, experimentation, pilot projects, community workshops, graduate study, conferences and research, led by our Indigenous colleagues Dr John Borrows, Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law and member of the Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation, and Dr Val Napoleon, Law Foundation Chair in Aboriginal Justice and Governance, member of the Saulteau First Nation.

The program is revolutionary – the first of its kind in the world. It seeks to teach Indigenous customary law in parallel with and in intensive comparison to state law, so that Indigenous legal orders receive something like the same attention that we provide to law derived from European traditions. The program is the culmination of a long process of inquiry, reflection, and experimentation, which was itself remarkable in the insights it produced.

Jeremy Webber was Dean of Law at the University of Victoria during the years up to its achievement. This presentation will provide an opportunity for discussion of the program, and anthropological reflections on approaches taken to compare and bring together "state law" and "indigenous law".