



BCAAFC | BC Association of
Aboriginal Friendship Centres



FIVE-YEAR PROGRAMS REPORT

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

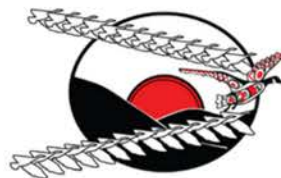


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge with respect and gratitude the communities who inform our work and allow us to work, play, and reside on their traditional territories.

The BCAAFC resides on the traditional territory of the Lkwungen-speaking peoples and the WSÁNEĆ peoples, the traditional keepers of this land who remain here as the original and rightful stewards.

Each Friendship Centre is powered by multigenerational relationships, a deep understanding of the communities they are a part of, and a shared commitment to providing culturally relevant social services to Indigenous peoples.



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ABOUT

About Us

In 1972, a group of Indigenous service delivery organizations located throughout B.C. formed a provincial body called the Pacific Association of Communications in Indian Friendship Centres (PACIFIC). Today, we're known as the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC)!

Twenty-five Friendship Centres make up the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

Every Friendship Centre runs programs that provide a valuable link of resources, community, and culture to the thousands of Indigenous people in B.C. who live off-reserve. Friendship Centres are where people come for support, fun, and family.

In 2022, we celebrate 50 years of working to promote, develop, and deliver accessible programs and services that support Indigenous peoples living in urban areas and away from home.

We look forward to continuing and advancing the Friendship Centre Movement in B.C. through advocacy and the delivery of programs and services that support the growth and prosperity of our member Centres and urban Indigenous people!

Introduction

The social sector is currently facing a host of significant challenges, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, housing issues, rising costs, low wages, and high staff turnover. This is often exacerbated by inconsistent and insufficient funding. Friendship Centres, which provide crucial services to Indigenous communities, are particularly affected and often struggle to compete with better-funded organizations.

It is important to acknowledge these challenges because they have a profound impact on Friendship Centres. Despite these difficulties, Friendship Centres continue to offer tailored services to their communities, which are in greater demand than ever.

In this report, we will outline the achievements and obstacles faced by Friendship Centres over the last five years, with the goal of highlighting their successes and securing the additional support they need.



BC FRIENDSHIP CENTRES

Cariboo Friendship Society (Williams Lake)
Conayt Friendship Society (Merritt)
Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society (Smithers)
Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society
Fort St. John Friendship Society
Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (Surrey)
Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert
Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society (Duncan)
Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society
Kermode Friendship Society (Terrace)
Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (Kelowna)
Lillooet Friendship Centre Society
Mission Friendship Centre Society
Nawican Friendship Centre (Dawson Creek)
North Okanagan Friendship Centre Society (Vernon)
Ooknakane Friendship Centre (Penticton)
Port Alberni Friendship Center
Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society
Quesnel Tillicum Society
Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre Society (Port Hardy)
Tansi Friendship Centre Society (Chetwynd)
Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Society (Nanaimo)
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Wachiay Friendship Centre Society (Courtenay)

Friendship Centres Celebrate 50!

Not only did BCAAFC celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2022, but seven Friendship Centres also celebrated their 50th Anniversary

Congratulations to: Cariboo Friendship Society (2019), Fort St. John Friendship Society (2019), Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society (2022), Mission Friendship Centre Society (2023), Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society (2022), and Quesnel Tillicum Society (2022)!



NATIONAL FUNDING

National Funding Contracts Come to an End.

These last five years have had a huge impact on Friendship Centres. Program points of service grew from 1 million to 4.8 million in 2023. Friendship Centres totalled over 12 million points of service over the last five years! In 2023, National funding via the National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Indigenous Services Canada came to an end. Thankfully, funding has been extended for two more fiscal years, but stable long-term funding is still needed with cost of living adjustments built in.

An increase in Funding is also needed for BC's growing Friendship Centers. It is increasingly crucial as the demands and numbers of our clients expand. The reality is that Programs & Services funding needs to be at least \$100,000 to cover the salary of one full-time staff member along with program expenses. There is also a pressing need for youth-specific funding. Friendship Centres and the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council have voiced and petitioned this need provincially and nationally every year for the past five years. Furthermore, consistent and secure funding is needed to address the challenges posed by the climate crisis that now include annual cycles of floods, fires, and extreme weather events.



Programs & Services (P&S) \$57,000+

The Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) Programs and Services funding supports new and ongoing efforts that serve urban Indigenous peoples and address locally-identified issues. Initiatives are supported in the following areas: women, vulnerable populations, youth, transition services, outreach programs, and community wellness

Organizational Capacity (OC) \$120,000+

The goal of the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) Organizational Capacity funding is to provide core funds to help Friendship Centres maintain a stable financial base from which to deliver culturally appropriate programs and supports, case management, and referral services that support urban Indigenous peoples and communities. This funding has an additional allocation that is calculated using a points-based model.

PROVINCIAL FUNDING



Wage equity, the rising cost of living, and the need for emergency funding are among the province's most significant challenges.

Increasing provincial funding to address wage equity, the skyrocketing cost of living in BC, and emergency funding is essential. The wage gap between public service employees and Friendship Centre staff continues to grow, with public service salaries rising annually while Friendship Centres have not received an increase in provincial funding for the past five years. Friendship Centre staff who already face stagnant wages and a lack of job security due to short-term contracts, continue to struggle with skyrocketing cost of living in BC. The cost of housing, food, and services affect Friendship Centres in all facets. Friendship Centres do their best to make the most of their budgets and provide effective programming and services but they are able to do less. Funding is not only stagnant but shrinking some facets. The First Citizen Fund (FCF) stream was actually reduced from \$25,000 to \$20,160. We hope that FCF is reinstated to its full amount in the future.

Provincial funding must also continue to grow and adapt to address the urgent climate crisis. Friendship Centres serve as critical emergency hubs during extreme weather events. Bolstering financial support will ensure their continued capacity to deliver essential services during emergencies without compromising their year-round programming.

Provincial Capacity (ProCap) \$61,600+

Provincial Capacity (ProCap) funding contributes to the core funding that Friendship Centres rely on to deliver their programs and services. Provincial Capacity funding can be used to expand and improve the infrastructure of Friendship Centres through Information Technology (IT) upgrades, staff training and development, and minor capital repairs or renovations. This funding also has an additional allocation that is calculated using a points-based model.

First Citizens Fund (FCF) \$20,160

The goal of FCF Friendship Centre Program (FCF-FCP) funding is to assist with each Friendship Centre's range of social, recreational, and cultural programming delivered to Indigenous people living in urban areas. This funding is usually used to top up other programs. These funds support the administrative costs associated with the development, implementation, and delivery of programming as well as program-related materials and supplies.



Mission Friendship Centre Society



Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association



Quesnel Tillicum Society



Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society



Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Society



Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre Society

FRASER REGION ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP CENTRE ASSOCIATION (FRAFCA): 2019/2020 HIGHLIGHTS

Avenues of Change

In December, a delightful West Coast winter solstice-themed event unfolded for the Avenues of Change project in the Guildford West neighbourhood. The organizers transitioned towards a more traditional cultural approach to mark the holiday season, culminating in a splendid blanketing ceremony for 100 children and youth within the community. Facilitated by the spiritual advisor and community Elder Eugene Harry, the event marked a significant milestone as it attracted our largest turnout to date, boasting over 200 enthusiastic participants.



Baby Welcoming

In the 2023/2024 year, one of the most successful outreach initiatives involved baby welcoming events organized through a partnership between FRAFCA and Surrey libraries. FRAFCA has actively participated in two events thus far. Following the initial event, a few members from FRAFCA held discussions with librarians to assess the first event's success and explore ways to enhance its Indigenization in future iterations. This dialogue proved successful, leading to the second event where FRAFCA's Elder commenced the proceedings with a prayer, shared teachings, and provided bannock for lunch. Given the considerable success and inclusivity of these events, there is a desire to continue participating in and collaborating with the libraries in the future.

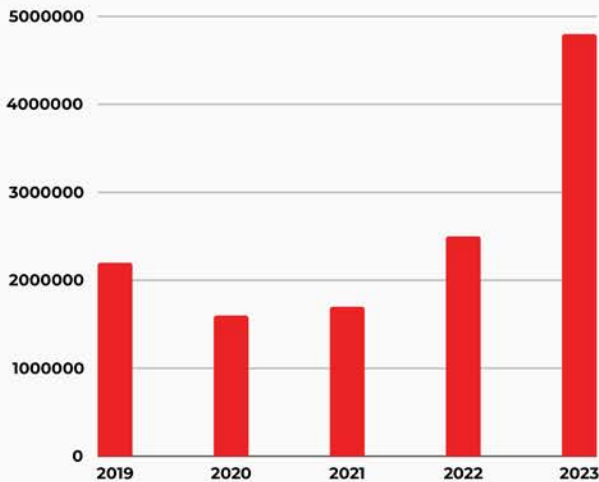


Points of Service

In the face of the initial decline in points of service triggered by the global pandemic, Friendship Centres not only persevered but thrived in maintaining their invaluable connection with the community.

By 2023, these centers not only rebounded from the setbacks but also managed to double their points of service compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

The resilience exhibited by Friendship Centres during challenging times demonstrated their unwavering commitment to community well-being.



12.8M

Five-Year Total
Points of Service
2019-2023

P&S: Tansi Friendship Centre

In the story ahead, an attendee shares how the Women's Group Program at the Tansi Friendship Centre made an impact on her life:

"Attending the weekly Women's Group and the Life Skills workshop has brought many benefits to my life. The time spent together attending Women's Group has really helped with my mental health in that it fills a social connection aspect of my life that I was

lacking since moving here to a new community from Alberta. Having the time, space, and supplies provided to do the crafts and activities has shown me an artist side of myself I wasn't aware of before. I've also expanded on those crafts by sharing and doing them with my children on weekends.

Having attended the Life Skills course was very beneficial in that it helped me learn and recognize healthy boundaries within myself as well as in my family and friendships. The CareLess session, Active Listening and Conflict Management session, Healthy Boundaries session as well as the Learning to Say No (Without the Guilt) sessions have given me so much more acceptance of myself and self-worth, and contentment in my life. I feel my life isn't so crazy and I don't feel anxious in or about my relationships as I did before attending. My quality of life, my self-esteem



has improved leaps and bounds by attending the Life Skills sessions. I truly look forward to Thursday's Women's Group and getting to spend time with a great group of ladies to share stories, life experiences, build connections, learn new things, and make different crafts has brought so much joy and happiness to my life."

People and Connections



PARTNERSHIPS

Friendship Centres successfully maintain their partnerships for 10 years or more.

Simultaneously, Friendship Centres are regularly seeking and creating new relationships.



STAFF

Staff employment has increased by 27% over five years. Only 3% of employees have retained employment with centres for five years or more; most employees are employed for one year or less. Longer term funding agreements would help drastically with staff retention.

Volunteer and Staff Highlights, 2019-2023

27,129

Volunteer hours in 2023. Volunteer hours were on a decline until 2020, then they exploded during the pandemic.

2,141

Volunteers in 2018. Though hours increased during the pandemic, the number of volunteers has declined.

1,449

Total staff in 2023. The number of staff has had a steady incline every year.

ProCap

CARIBOO FRIENDSHIP CENTRE: INNOVATION DURING COVID

The Executive Director at Cariboo Friendship Centre shares their Friendship Centre's experience during lockdown and the benefits that the flexibility of ProCap funding provides:

"During this quarter, we have had to find very innovative ways to support our families, Elders, and vulnerable populations. We have been committed to continued community outreach during the peak of the crisis to ensure the safety of many of the at-risk folks. We have been looking after people from a safe distance.

It is abundantly clear to us that we need to help people maintain social connections to reduce the impact of stress and the loneliness of isolation.

We have provided suggestions on how to talk via video chat with family and friends or to send an email or the old fashioned letter. We have created posters and signs with encouraging words like remembering that you are not alone and that we are just a phone call away.

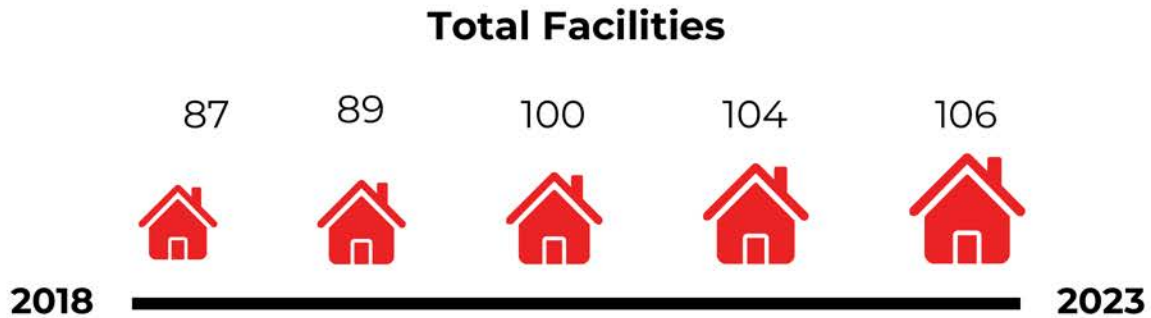
We have supplied arts and craft materials, snacks, treats, recipes and other fun activity ideas in baskets to our families of the preschool each week since the pandemic was declared.

Hallway Bingo for the Elders at the Eagles Nest was a resounding success.

Be kind to yourself and understand you can't do it all. We thank all of our staff that rose up to the challenge." (2020)



BUILDINGS & FACILITIES



The Number of facilities have increased steadily over the past five years

A need for more space for programming has driven Friendship Centres to renovate their spaces as well as purchase and build facilities that suit their specific needs. The most popular use for facilities is programming with administration, housing, shelters, and social enterprise being important uses as well.

Friendship Centres are able to use a small percentage of their core funding towards improving their facilities; many maxing out contract restrictions. Though 44% of Friendship Centres consider their facilities in “good” or “excellent” conditions, 27% mention the imminent need for improvements.

Many centres incorporate the culture of their area into their buildings. The Dze L' Kant Friendship Centre completed the mural shown below in 2022.





Top Left: Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Top Right: Kermode Friendship Society, Bottom Left: Conayt Friendship Centre, Middle Right: Tillicum Lelum Friendship Society, Bottom Right: OoKnakane Friendship Centre.

FORT NELSON ABORIGINAL FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY: SISTERS IN SPIRIT

The Executive Director of the Fort Nelson Friendship Centre, Linda Ashdown, recounts a success story regarding the "Sisters in Spirit" program, emphasizing the creation of a documentary film as a means to engage the community:

"The COVID pandemic had been going on for almost a year. We came up with a plan to engage the community. We made a documentary. Sisters In Spirit is the name of the movement formed to remember murdered and missing women. In honour of that, we produced a 45-minute documentary. We hired a professional cameraman and we opened the documentary with a blessing from two traditional drummers. Four speakers were enlisted, one of whom was the mother of a murdered woman, case still unsolved. Due to COVID, the movie theatre had been turned into a drive-in. We were able to use their facilities for the public showing. Prior to the event, we did a motorcade procession through town with the RCMP in the lead. As soon as the vehicles were parked in their spots in front of the outdoor screen, our staff and volunteers served the attendees pre-ordered take-out snacks such as pizza, popcorn, and drinks. Based on community feedback, we consider this one of our success stories." (2021)





CULTURE

Highlights



2,013

Clients
in 2019



3

Most Provided Category
Over 5 years



6,803

Event Points of
Service in 2019

Culture in Friendship Centres

All Friendship Centres provide a range of cultural programming. Quesnel Tillicum Friendship Centre chronicles the types of programming they were running in 2020 below:

“Drum making is still one of our most popular workshops and is still going very strong. We have also done Métis spoon workshops where we make up our own spoons and learn Métis songs. Our Elder circles are very well attended and great ideas are being developed. For our smudge bowl workshops, we go to our local rec center, make smudge bowls from pottery, and we celebrate in the end with a smudge bowl ceremony. We had Elders gift the youth with a small package of smudge.”

National Indigenous Peoples Day is also a big celebration for all Friendship Centres. Conayt Friendship Centre hosted a “mini” Pow Wow to celebrate. They describe below:

“Drummers and dancers came from the community and around the province. Information booths about Conayt programs and services were set up. Other information booths concerning local plants, harvesting, and medicines were set up to provide education to attendees. A story-telling/teaching booth was available. Traditional and other games were played. It is estimated that over 500 persons attended the event.”

During the pandemic, Friendship Centres found a way to continue their cultural programming:

“In the midst of the global pandemic, Hiiye'yu Lelum ran a summer camp in 2020. We provided services to 20 different children, whereby they received camp activities such as culture, recreation, and Hulquminum language lessons. There is nothing more rewarding than being greeted by smiling, happy children who are active and creative.” (2020)

Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) celebrates 50 Years

In 2019, VNFC celebrated half a century of unwavering community support. On September 29, 2019, a vibrant gathering took place in Saanich, embracing the spirit of togetherness through traditional dances, songs, and drumming. The event also went beyond tradition, offering a spectrum of activities from the playful bouncy castle to a lively human foosball game. Everyone experienced a day filled with cultural enrichment, entertainment, and delicious food!

Executive Director Ron Rice reflects on the center's impact:

“We're proud of the impact we've had over the years, but our community has faced struggles and challenges. Many of our people are on the streets with addictions. It's tough for some because they're usually at a lower income level. With this centre, we are able to build strong connections and pass our traditions onto the next generation.” (2019)



Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre



Quesnel Tillicum Friendship Centre



Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre



Hiiye'yu Lelum Society



Port Alberni Friendship Centre



Tansi Friendship Centre

ELDERS



Kamloops Friendship Society: Elder's Wellness Program

Since January 2023, the Elder's program at the Kamloops Friendship Centre has been a bustling hub of activity, meeting four times a week for four-hour sessions. With a consistent group of 14 elders, the program has successfully implemented diverse activities.

A standout achievement was the Food Sense for the Active Senior Program, a six-week hands-on nutrition initiative in collaboration with the Canadian Diabetes Association and overseen by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. This program not only fostered unity among the Elders but also culminated in a joyous certificate distribution ceremony where participants expressed their gratitude to the program coordinator.

Collaborating with their MMIWG program, the Elder's program facilitated workshops like moccasin making, drum making, and earring crafting, actively participating in their well-received two-day conference in March. Future plans include organizing healing ceremonies, and traditional medicine gatherings, among other events.

The Elders also attend the Urban Nights and Powwow Nights with Secwepmec Child and Family Services events, as well as participate in Elders' luncheons and workshops at Thompson Rivers University. Networking with community partners continues to enrich the program offerings for Elders.

The impact of this program is evident in the positive feedback received. A couple who joined in May 2022 expressed their appreciation for the welcoming environment, diverse events, and the program's role in enhancing their social lives. The success of these initiatives reflects the positive influence of the funding received, keeping the Elders engaged, learning, and celebrating their culture. (2023)





Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert



Nawican Friendship Centre



Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society



Conayt Friendship Society



Cariboo Friendship Society



Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society

A young woman with long dark hair is kneeling in a forest, focused on digging in the soil with a shovel. She is wearing a camouflage-patterned puffer jacket with an orange lining and a matching orange scarf. The ground is dark and rocky, with some green plants and ferns nearby. A green bucket is partially visible on the left side of the frame. The word "YOUTH" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

YOUTH

Lillooet Friendship Centre: Chillaxin

Friendship Centres emphasize the crucial need for dedicated youth funding to ensure the success of youth programs. This advocacy has been consistently voiced and petitioned for the past five years and beyond.

This past year, BCAAFC's Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council (PAYC) passed a motion at the National Aboriginal Friendship Centres (NAFC) Annual General Meeting imploring the NAFC to work towards obtaining youth-specific funding. Programs and services funding is often used in place of youth-specific funding.

The Lillooet Friendship Centre Society ran a vastly successful program called "Chillaxin." This program provides a safe space for youth to connect as well as partake in activities.

The aim of this program was to find new and creative ways to meet youth needs in the following categories: mental, physical, nutritional, social, and cultural.

One of the youth shares their experience below:

"The reason I like coming to chill at Chillaxin is because it's a nice place to hang out with other people and they always have something new and fun to do."

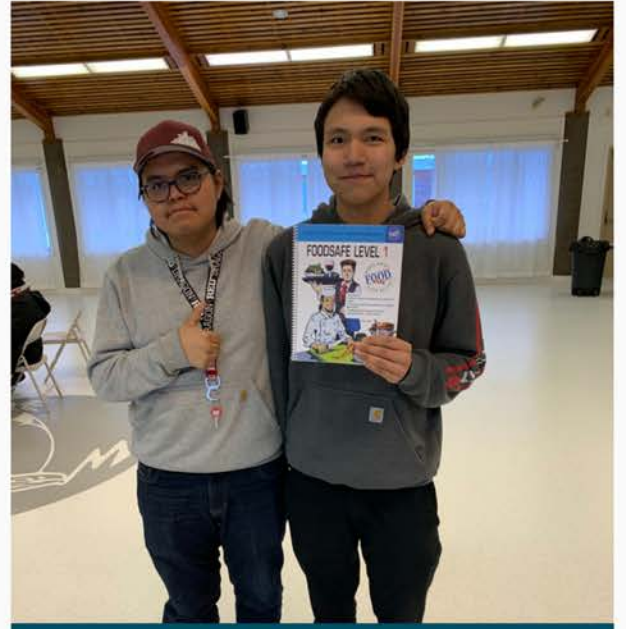
"I like relaxing at Chillaxin. I like the free meals and the field trips. It's fun fundraising, learning to make money. I like the music we listen to. At the Gathering Our Voices youth conference last month, I got to meet

First Nations Rap Artist and performer Drezus and took his workshop called "Rhymes and Reasons to Express Yourself". The group of us at the workshop wrote lines of our own and made a song and performed it. It was awesome, although I was a bit nervous. I got to talk to him in person and out of the blue, he asked me to help him sell his CDs during the dance. He gifted me two of his CDs and two of his stickers in exchange. I felt like I fulfilled my dreams. I also enjoyed the silk screen t-shirt making workshop. It was one of the best days of my life!" (2019)





Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society



Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society



Wachiay Friendship Centre Society



Hiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society



Quesnel Tillicum Society



Tansi Friendship Centre Society



HEALTH & WELLNESS

At a Glance



6,420

Nutrition Points of Service
Average over five years



3 / #4

Most Accessed Programs:
Mental Health & Nutrition



6,711

Mental Health Points
of Service in 2023

Health & Wellness

Access to health and wellness programs ranks among the highest priorities for community members. Nutrition and mental health collectively contribute to an average of over 12,000 points of service each year!

The Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert celebrates the success of their Public Health & Wellness Community Fair below:

On November 11, 2019, the Public Health & Wellness Fair, a mental health and addictions awareness one-week event, was hosted by the Friendship House. The event was a collaborative effort with various community organizations including Northern Health, BC Transition Society, RCMP, Métis Society, and Anti-Poverty Society.



During the event, engaging activities such as charades were organized with clients and community members. Although client photos are excluded, the fair achieved great success with attendance from community members, clients, and youth. The activities took place at the Public Library for one-on-one interactions and at the Civic Centre for larger group activities.



Friendship House youth actively participated in the Mental Health & Wellness Fair at the Civic Centre. The youth hosted surveys, games, challenges, and offered prizes to contribute to the fair's vibrant atmosphere.

Throughout the week, the Public Health & Wellness Fair attracted well over 1000 attendees. Cultural activities were a highlight, featuring traditional foods, a welcome to the territories, support from Elders, smudging, prayers, drumming and songs with participation from all attendees. The event not only served vulnerable populations but also raised awareness for anyone who visited. (2021)

Wachiay Friendship Centre: Food for Thought

In 2020, the Food for Thought Community Garden (FFT) transformed a warehouse parking lot into a vibrant space, providing healthy food and medicine for community members. Originally conceived as a platform for Elders and community members to grow their own food and medicinal plants, the project evolved due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Despite challenges, staff adhered to social distancing protocols and revamped the garden with wheelchair-accessible paths, a greenhouse, garden boxes, a bean teepee, and a medicine wheel garden. Over 30 bags of fresh produce were donated weekly through the Helping Hands program and to Elders in need. The Medicine Wheel garden, designed for ceremonial and medicinal purposes, became a valuable community resource.

After the first wave of the pandemic, workshops, including a zucchini race with Clever Raven Childcare, resumed. The garden hosted sessions on braiding sweetgrass, making mugwort smudge stick, and Elders shared teachings.

The program director maintained community engagement through the "Food for Thought Wachiay Community Garden" Facebook page. The page now boasts over 70 members. Twenty volunteers have contributed over 400 hours to date. The garden has not only adapted to challenging circumstances but has become a thriving community space! (2021)



"What was once a warehouse parking lot is now buzzing with colour, life, plants, animals, healthy food, and medicine for our community members, families, Elders, youth and children!"



A photograph showing two women practicing first aid on a mannequin lying on a stretcher. The woman on the left is wearing a red shirt and has her hair in a bun. The woman on the right is wearing a striped shirt and a grey beanie. They are both looking down at the mannequin. The background shows a window with blinds and a wall. The text "EDUCATION & TRAINING" is overlaid in the center of the image.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Prince George Native Friendship Centre: Employment Centre



“We are continuing to provide services that will ensure sustainable employment for our Urban Aboriginal Community, breaking the cyclical barriers that our community members face.”

The Employment Center at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre successfully assisted 102 clients in gaining employment by providing certifications and work gear.

The center provided 1,040 activities to clients, including gaining employment skills, work experience, obtaining social insurance numbers and BCIDs, driver's license online training, workplace safety training, professional restaurant and kitchen training, and transportation assistance to camps and construction projects.

To ensure sustainable employment, the center conducted virtual workshops covering resume/cover letter writing, online job searches, cultural topics, and employer engagement. The program delivery followed a best practice approach based on the Medicine Wheel holistic model. A strong connection was maintained with clients, actively engaging them in job searches and assisting with setting up LinkedIn profiles.

Ongoing services aim to ensure sustainable employment for the Urban Aboriginal Community, breaking cyclical barriers for community members. (2022)

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Society: Doctoral Research

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre partnered with MITACs National Research organization to bring on an Indigenous Doctoral level research student regarding access to health services for Urban First Nations people on Vancouver Island.

Her work included taking a closer look at the impact of youth programming offered through the Friendship Centre. To ground the research in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, a blanketing ceremony was conducted with Elders who shared their guidance and

perspectives on the research topic as interviewees. The blanketing ceremony is one of the highest offerings of respect, appreciation, and protection. We acknowledge the importance of upholding Indigenous values in all aspects of our work, therefore, this ceremony was a critical part of our doctoral student's research. (2022)





ADVOCACY

At a Glance



#1

Most Accessed
Programs



#2

Most Provided via Friendship
Centre Programs



7,496

Points of Service
in 2023

Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society: Orange Shirt Week

In 2021, the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre dedicated the last week of September to Orange Shirt Week activities, focusing on residential school awareness. Events included a smudging tent on Main Street, canoe paddling on Tyhee Lake and Lake Kathlyn, as well as engagement with local schools. Sonia Palmer, a trauma-informed mental health outreach worker and residential school survivor, connected with students, fostered partnerships and raised awareness about residential school impacts.

To address the trauma from the recently discovered unmarked graves, the Friendship Centre distributed 215 orange fabric squares to Muhiem Elementary and Ecole La Grande-Ourse. Students were encouraged to express themselves on the squares. On September 29th, students presented their squares to Sonia, who sewed them into blankets for each class, creating a lasting symbol for the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in September 2022. (2022)

Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society (VAFCS): Poverty Reduction

This Friendship Centre leveraged its funding to build its relationship with the Ministry of Poverty Reduction. As a direct result, a poverty reduction worker was assigned to work out of the centre. This helped in reducing client anxiety and fast-tracking provincial programs aimed at reducing poverty.

Susan Tatoosh, Executive Director of VAFCS speaks on this connection below:

"A new partnership between the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has a community integration specialist working in our office once a week and connecting one-on-one with the urban Indigenous people who we support here. Having a CIS team member in the office helps to streamline access to government services for urban Indigenous people who are experiencing poverty and homelessness, and recognizes the importance of VAFCS's culturally based supports and services." (2020)

Another highlight for the Vancouver Centre is an APTN Feature on James Harry, an outreach worker for the Haisla Nation who operates from the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society.

He works to help Indigenous people find housing and recover from addiction and abuse in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Ultimately, he strives to have his client reconnect with their families and culture.

Other nations in B.C. are now emulating the success of the program and hiring their own outreach workers to help their members. (2020)





Mission Friendship Centre Society



Lillooet Friendship Centre Society



Tansi Friendship Centre Society



Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society



Fort St. John Friendship Society



Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society



ANTI-VIOLENCE

MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are among the most at risk of becoming victims of violence, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation due to the ongoing effects of colonialism, racism, and discrimination.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was launched in September 2016. It addresses issues of sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, bullying, harassment, suicide, and self-harm. The vision of the inquiry is to build a foundation that allows Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ folks to reclaim their power and place within their communities.

Work towards this vision is paramount to Friendship Centres. Over the years, Centres have run events, created tools, and continue to champion Indigenous Women and Girls. The two highlights below are pieces of the large work the Friendship Centres do for this movement.

Kermode Friendship Society

Kermode organized a poignant commemoration walk for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, drawing an approximate attendance of 100 individuals. The event encompassed a commemoration walk, a healing ceremony, the provision of food and refreshments, drumming, and smudging. Participants took a moment to acknowledge and remember the women who have gone missing on the Highway of Tears.

The Terrace RCMP provided valuable support for the event, ensuring the safety of attendees during a challenging period marked by demonstrations and discrimination in Northwest British Columbia. Their assistance, particularly in maintaining safety during the walk and ceremonies, was greatly appreciated.

Fort Nelson Friendship Society

A documentary titled "Sisters In Spirit" was created to commemorate murdered and missing women by the Fort Nelson Friendship Centre. The 45-minute documentary was professionally filmed, featuring a blessing from two traditional drummers at the outset. The production included four speakers, among them the mother of an unsolved murder victim.

To accommodate COVID restrictions for the premiere, a traditional movie theatre was transformed into a drive-in. Upon parking at designated spots in front of the outdoor screen, staff, and volunteers efficiently served pre-ordered take-out snacks, such as pizza, popcorn, and drinks to attendees.

Prior to the event, a motorcade procession through town, led by the RCMP, was organized.

The success of the event was measured through community feedback, and it is considered a notable achievement in engaging the community during the challenging circumstances posed by the ongoing pandemic.



Nawican Friendship Centre



Kermode Friendship Society



Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society



North Okanagan Friendship Centre Society



Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society



Victoria Native Friendship Centre



**LOOKING
FORWARD**

Reflection & Looking Forward

Over the last five years, Friendship Centres have seen great growth and success. It has also seen many barriers. In addition to the direct impacts of the pandemic, centres also saw how the pandemic quickened and exacerbated the pace of other critical and existing problems.

Friendship Centres saw a rise of 20% in clients in all programs and services in five years! An estimated 80% of Indigenous people are living in urban areas. Friendship Centres provide much-needed culturally safe advocacy, supports, and programming. They are also a place of community and gathering.

This year B.C. Friendship Centres have served 432,924 clients through a variety of programs, services, and events; with the average over the past five years being 371,243 clients served. Client numbers are collected separately per program and event. Our numbers include clients who attend multiple programs and events.

Despite the pandemic causing a decrease in physical clients, points of connection have remained consistent. Friendship Centres consistently find ways to provide help and support. Every staff member and volunteer works diligently to assist, reduce barriers, and enhance the success of each community member and their broader communities.

Climate Crisis and Friendship Centres

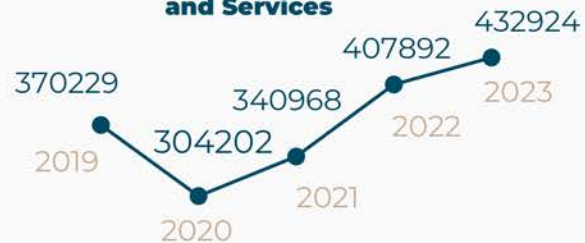
Over the past five years, British Columbia has endured a relentless onslaught of natural disasters across all seasons, from prolonged fire seasons to harsh winters and devastating floods. Amidst these escalating climate challenges, Friendship Centres have consistently risen to the occasion by extending crucial assistance to their local and wider communities.

The Lillooet Friendship Society, in particular, stands out as a vital emergency hub in their region. This became extremely apparent during highway closures caused by fires, floods, and severe winter weather. They provided essential services like food security, healthcare, and clothing for evacuees. They remained open when others shut their doors. Most Friendship Centres have a similar story, which becomes especially critical for Friendship Centres in smaller communities that lack comparable organizations to provide aid.

Despite their exemplary efforts, Friendship Centres face a significant challenge due to a lack of dedicated emergency funding and planning resources. It is imperative to establish dedicated emergency funding for Friendship Centres as well as robust regional and provincial support systems. As emergencies become more frequent and severe, the need for immediate funding is increasingly urgent.

 **20%**

Clients in all Programs and Services





Over the past five years, BC Friendship Centres and BCAAFC have advocated their pressing shared needs:

Long-Term Funding

One-year contracts and not knowing if/when a contract will be renewed affect staff consistency, halt project/program progress, and burden Friendship Centre administration. Long-term funding would allow Friendship Centres to deliver programs and services that meet the increasingly complex needs of their communities without interruptions or delays.

Emergency Support

B.C. has faced a range of natural disasters over the last five years. Wildfires, floods, and a worldwide pandemic are unfortunate trends that will continue. Despite minimal to no financial support, Friendship Centres were on the frontlines and became emergency hubs to help everyone in need. An investment in disaster relief funding would be an asset.

Final Words

Despite barriers, Friendship Centres continue to find new, creative, and culturally enriched ways to meet the increasing needs of urban Indigenous people. Friendship Centre doors are always open from a simple cup of coffee to a refuge in an ever-evolving world. BCAAFC and NAFC are hard at work to address the urgent and increasing funding needs of Friendship Centres across B.C. We envision a future where funding not only meets the evolving needs of Friendship Centres but actively contributes to their growth and impact on the communities they serve. Thank you to all Friendship Centres, their clients, communities, as well as all of those who help shape and support the Friendship Centre Movement in British Columbia.

Increased Funding

Friendship Centres continue to report challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified individuals due to the increasing cost of living, higher salaries, and benefits offered by competing agencies.

Space

Centres are out-growing their aging buildings and are looking towards renovating their buildings to suit their increasing needs. Longer-term infrastructure funding for repairs and renovations would be a way to significantly improve various funding streams.

Flexibility

Contracts are often too restrictive for Friendships Centres to address evolving needs. Flexibility in contracts would help Friendship Centres in every aspect.



Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society



Tansi Friendship Centre Society



Fort St. John Friendship Society



Nawican Friendship Centre



Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society



Port Alberni Friendship Center



BCAAFC | BC Association of
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