



BC Association of Aboriginal
Friendship Centres
BCAAFC

Annual Report

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

2023–2024



BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Annual Report 2023-2024



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

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 services to Indigenous peoples.

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From our President

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to the future, I am proud to share with you the progress and achievements of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) in our 2023/2024 annual report.

Over the past year, we have continued to work tirelessly in support of the health, well-being, and prosperity of Indigenous people and communities across British Columbia.

Through our programs and initiatives, we have strived to uphold the values of friendship, respect, and mutual support that are at the core of our organization and the Friendship Centre Movement.

From supporting cultural revitalization initiatives to advocating for social justice and equality, BCAAFC has been

at the forefront of positive change in our communities. However, we recognize that there is still much work to be done.

The housing crisis and rising food costs continue to disproportionately affect Indigenous people. We have a lot of work ahead of us and will need to collaborate with our partners to address these pressing issues. It is essential that we come together to find sustainable solutions that ensure all members of our communities have access to safe and affordable housing and nutritious food.

As we navigate the complexities of the current social and political landscape, I am confident that our collective strength and determination will continue to move us forward. Together, we can overcome obstacles, celebrate successes, and build a

brighter future for Indigenous peoples in British Columbia.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment and dedication to the mission of the BCAAFC. Your hard work and passion are truly the driving force behind our success, and I am honored to serve alongside such dedicated individuals.

I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that the coming year will bring, and I am excited to continue our journey of empowerment, advocacy, and solidarity.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Annette Morgan
President



From our Executive Director

It's been interesting and inspiring to reflect on my time at BCAAFC. We have been through so much together in the last seven years. We have moved from troubling waters to what now feels like many hands pulling fast and hard together in our Friendship Centre canoe.

We have cleaned up and restructured BCAAFC from its constitution to its policies. We have expanded our team and are organizing our staff positions and programs. We are advocating for better procurement processes and increased funding.

We have been recognized for our collective efforts, growth, and good work with core Friendship Centre funding from the province and \$6 million in provincial COVID support for urban community members on top of what the NAFC brought in for us.

We know that Gathering Our Voices means so much to people and can be the kind of event that can save the life of an Indigenous youth. So we asked for long-term funding for GOV and received \$10 million.

We also took the bold step of proposing significant changes within the social services sector and we have been provided with the funds and mandate to lead that change.

BCAAFC also received \$8 million to lead work that advances reconciliation and \$1 million to develop cultural safety training for the government. We currently have multiple landmark projects moving ahead collectively.

Of course, we are also helping our Friendship Centre members move forward through initiatives like our first-ever custom MBA course on

Advancing Reconciliation and an anti-racism facilitation training program.

At the same time, our Friendship Centres have been extraordinarily busy developing health services, new housing, and daycares. They have been finding ways to better support Indigenous people and families. Many Friendship Centres have at least one major project in development.

As the climate crisis creates new emergencies, our Friendship Centres drop almost everything to support their communities during the increasingly frequent fires and floods and the long-term problems like homelessness and food insecurity that ensue as a result.

There are a dozen Friendship Centre leaders in our MBA in Advancing Reconciliation while they also run their

organizations. They will make our members and communities stronger. We are working on expanding the Safespace app to include all aspects of racism so that we can be the ones to have, analyze, and relay that data. The BCAAFC team also hosted an amazing (possibly the best ever) Gathering Our Voices conference and our youth have responded with a renewed interest in our Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council.

We do a lot of good work here. We know what we do and we know why we do it. We have asked for major funds to support this work and we received them. Now we will focus on getting all the things done.

There is much more to do, of course, and we are keeping an eye on the future and the skills and services we will need in the years ahead. We have

a lot of joyful and exciting work ahead of us.

Looking back at it all, it has been another full year. Sometimes our achievements can seem small until you look at them from a distance or over a series of years. We have come a long way together, helping to map the future of urban Indigenous people with culturally safe and appropriate services.

All of this is possible only because of our staff, members, volunteers, partners, and all the urban First Nation, Métis, and Inuit folks in every Friendship Centre community who support us and support each other in this work. Thank you for continuing to show up for each other. Thank you for guiding and leading our organizations. Thank you for caring for your communities through the crises we



are facing. Thank you for supporting the Friendship Centre Movement. Thank you for your contributions, your leadership, your focus, your ideas, and for sitting with us as we move this canoe forward.

Leslie Varley
Executive Director

Friendship Centres

There are 25 Friendship Centres across B.C. Together they represent over 1,700 employees, 600 partnerships, and 1,000,000 client interactions each year. The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is the umbrella organization representing and supporting the 25 Friendship Centres in B.C.

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)

The Movement

The Friendship Centre Movement is made up of over 100 Friendship Centres from across Canada.

Friendship Centres provide culturally relevant programs and services for Indigenous people living in urban communities. Collectively, they are the most significant off-reserve Indigenous service delivery infrastructure.

Today, Friendship Centres provide wraparound programs and services in every area you could think of. To many, they are a safe space, a second home, and a place of learning.

The history of the Friendship Centre Movement explains the gift Friendship Centres have for integrating knowledge networks from the past and present to guide and sustain progress.



70 Years of Friendship

The Friendship Centre Movement in B.C. has been benefiting the health and wellness of urban Indigenous people for 70 years.

When listening to stories from trailblazers, founders, and knowledge-keepers within the Movement, it is evident that Friendship Centres have been leaders and change-makers. While Friendship Centres have evolved over time, they have retained the core values that shaped their beginnings.

This is a movement that started with a single referral centre all the way back in 1954.

In **1954**, the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club was formed to provide support to Indigenous students in Vancouver.

By **1970**, it was common for government service agencies to refer Indigenous clients to their local Friendship Centre.



In **1963**, the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club changed its title to the Vancouver Indian Centre Society, and was recognized as a place for all Indigenous people transitioning into Vancouver.

In **1972**, the Friendship Centres that had been established throughout B.C. formed a provincial body, the Pacific Association of Communications in Indian Friendship Centres (PACIFIC), to help the centres share information with one another.

In **1975**, the B.C. government began providing funding to PACIFIC to distribute to the Friendship Centres.

By the early 80s, BC Friendship Centres recognized the need for a provincial body to liaison with the B.C. and Federal Governments. In **1982**, they reinvented PACIFIC into the BC Association of Indian Friendship Centres to represent the then 20 Friendship Centres in British Columbia.

In **1996**, the management of AFCP moved to the National Association of Friendship Centres.

In **2022**, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres celebrated its 50th anniversary!



In **1983**, the federal government created the Native Friendship Centre Program (NFCP).

In **1988**, the NFCP became the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program (AFCP), which secured the status of permanent funding from the federal government.

By **2002**, a total of 25 Friendship Centres are members of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

In **2011**, BCAAFC created the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP). A protocol agreement was signed with the B.C. Government in 2014.

This year, **2024**, marks 70 years of the Friendship Centre Movement supporting the health, wellness, and prosperity of urban Indigenous people in B.C.

Vision, Mission, Values

Vision

BCAAFC is an innovative organization working collaboratively with its member centres and partners to support urban Indigenous people as they realize their vision of health, wellness, and prosperity.

Values

- *Transparency and Openness*
- *Reciprocal Accountability*
- *Valuing and Upholding Diverse Indigenous Traditions and Cultures*
- *Integrity*
- *Collaboration*
- *Decolonizing Approaches*

Mission

Our mission is to advance 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 centers and urban Indigenous people.

Strategic Priorities and Goals 2020-2023

1. Increase our capacity to be effective advocates for our member Friendship Centres and all urban Indigenous people
2. Promote the practice of our languages and our cultures
3. Improve our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees
4. Strengthen the unity of the Friendship Centre Movement in B.C.
5. Support and encourage emerging leaders
6. Secure long-term funding for programs, services, and capital projects
7. Increase collaboration with First Nations and local, provincial and federal governments
8. Improve our ability to deliver high-quality services across the province through our network of member Friendship Centres.

Increase our capacity to be effective advocates for our Friendship Centres

BCAAFC works on behalf of our members and urban Indigenous people and strives to actively influence policy, legislation, and decision-making at all levels of government. We sit on roundtables, present to committees, and meet with decision-makers to ensure that our Friendship Centres are informed and supported and that their interests and needs are represented and prioritized.

Distinctions-Based Approach

BCAAFC has been involved in the development and implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) for many years. We have conducted surveys, collected information, invited speakers to our membership meetings, and met with ministers and bureaucrats—all in order to represent the needs and experiences of urban Indigenous people.

In 2023, the provincial government took the next step and adopted a distinctions-based approach for all of its relations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. In light of this, we have renewed our advocacy efforts in this area and are making sure that the needs of the 80% of Indigenous people in B.C. who live off-reserve are

also included and considered when work is done and when decisions are made.

Accessibility Legislation

At our February membership meeting, the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Social Development

“A distinction-based approach means that the Province’s work with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people will be conducted in a way that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, and priorities of each while respecting and acknowledging the unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments of each.”

- B.C. Government Website

and Poverty Reduction spoke about the implementation of the *Accessible British Columbia Act* and the development of accessibility standards. BCAAFC also sits on an advisory committee for the Accessibility Directorate—a group that works across government and with the disability and business communities to improve accessibility.

Red Dress Alert System

At the federal level, BCAAFC has been advocating for the implementation of a red dress alert system. A nationwide emergency number and consistent protocols to investigate cases of missing Indigenous women and girls were two of the many things called for in the 2019 final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We have advocated for the importance of investing in such a system and have presented to committees made up of Members of Parliament about how such an alert system should be

implemented. We have also suggested that alerts be complemented with other communication methods to mitigate barriers like unequal access to technology and inconsistent cellular and internet coverage in rural and remote communities.

Anti-Racism Data Legislation

Over the past few years, BCAAFC has been involved in the development of the B.C. *Anti-Racism Data Act* to ensure the needs of urban Indigenous people would be adequately addressed.

An Anti-Racism Data Committee is collaborating with the provincial government to dismantle systemic racism in the public sector and to gather and monitor data to help close the racial equity gaps that exist in the public service.

Our involvement in this work is to ensure that our membership can provide input and share their experiences and ideas.

Current research priorities include health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples, education outcomes for Indigenous people (including their access to and use of available supports), and Indigenous data sovereignty.

Social Justice Workshops

This year for Gathering Our Voices (GOV), one of the things that our Provincial Youth Advocacy Council (PAYC) asked of us, was to focus more on social justice issues in the workshops that are offered to the youth delegates.

PAYC sees GOV as a place to prepare and inspire the next generation of Indigenous advocates and a place where young leaders can connect and learn about important issues and how to get involved in advocacy.

It is something that we paid close attention to in the planning of GOV 2024 and something we will continue to do so over the coming years.

Promote the practice of our languages and our cultures

Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program

The Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program (DAFGP) aims to address health inequities and improve birth and postpartum outcomes by increasing access to doula care for Indigenous families. The DAFGP provides financial support so Indigenous families can access full-spectrum birth and postpartum doula services and supports.

Program participants continue to highlight how birth workers' knowledge and understanding of the

birthing process contribute to their birth experience, especially related to decision-making and advocating for families in stressful situations.

For Indigenous doulas, the Cultural Community Care Honorarium has helped to provide wraparound and culturally supportive services. For vulnerable families, the DAFGP Grant Extension allows birth workers to provide a continuation of support to families that require specific care.

This year, the Caretaking Earthside 2023: A Birth Worker Community Conference brought together

Indigenous birth workers in the spirit of knowledge sharing, connection, ceremony, and collective care. Attendees shared experiences and expertise and returned to their communities with support, an emboldened personal practice, and strong Indigenous birth worker kinship networks.

The DAFGP team also hosted a learning circle at the Victoria General Hospital with staff and hospital directors. The team shared ideas and experiences on the theme of 'Giving Space Back in Perinatal Care' and led discussions related to the often unmet needs of Indigenous families.

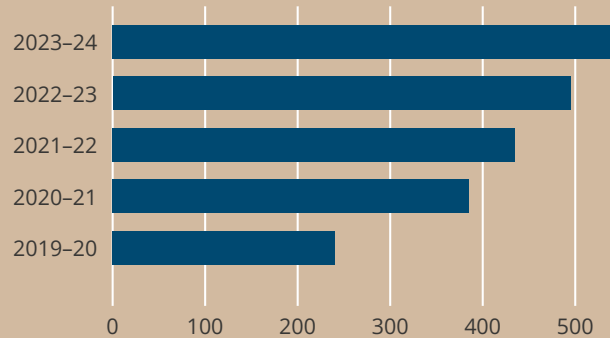
Demand for the DAFGP continues to grow each year and it is a challenge to secure enough funding to be able to approve every family that applies for the grant. Current funding does not

“Doulas reduce hours of birthing, which saves money for the hospital, where staffing is integral. Through COVID, there has never been more stress. Anesthesiologists are being pulled away from moms for other patients. Staffing numbers are low. When doulas are brought in, that is less support needed in hospital. It frees up bed space and reduces stress for medical staff.”

- DAFGP Birth Worker

sufficiently support the growth and sustainability of this important care and service provision.

Applications Approved per Fiscal Year



In addition, there are several rural and remote communities across B.C. whose community members must travel to urban centres to deliver their children. Meeting the needs of these families requires increasing services in rural and remote communities.

Child Care & Early Years

The primary goal of the BCAAFC Child Care Planner is to meaningfully support each of the 25 Friendship Centres in meeting the needs of urban Indigenous families with children in the early years. High levels of

engagement, strong connections, and improved communication with Friendship Centres is the result of consistent effort, new initiatives, and ongoing support through the Early Years Community of Practice.

The Child Care Planner has continued to work with the province to facilitate access to provincial grants and other funding for new building projects that would create new spaces for quality Indigenous child care and early learning centers in communities.

Among many other activities, the Child Care Planner facilitated and hosted a five-part professional development workshop series for Early Childhood Education staff in Prince George and has been collaborating with community partners to host engagement sessions and support the development of two new Indigenous child care centres in Smithers.

In the coming years, increased participation of Friendship Centres in the Early Learning and Child Care community will be essential to both improving Indigenous-led child care services and informing related policy and legislation.



542
Indigenous families supported by the Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program



Improve our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees

Friendship Centre Training Program

The Friendship Centre Training Program strives to increase capacity, provide resources, and create connection for Friendship Centre staff across B.C. All course offerings are based on direct input from Friendship Centre staff and the BCAAFC team.

Over the past year, the program continued to grow and improve. We more than doubled our number of participants compared to last year and we provided our first in-person event (the program launched during the COVID pandemic).

By offering online programming, paying for travel to in-person events, and partnering with ComIT to provide self-paced certificate programs, we can reach more staff, in more diverse

I would 100% recommend this workshop because it gave me a clear understanding of the Indigenous staff and clients I work with and how I can better support them. I am sincerely grateful to the BCAAFC Team for all its efforts and hard work.

Great job overall! [The instructor] was a really good fit for this training and I think it's incredible that BCAAFC is able to pay for this training opportunity.

roles and positions, and in locations that might otherwise have missed out on such training.

Offering training on topics like policy, communications, and HR has had a direct impact on Friendship Centres. Attendees have brought their existing policies and worked together to adjust and improve them. Another session focused on difficult conversations and effective communication at work. It has since inspired attendees to book the same training for their own staff teams.

However, interest in online training is noticeably decreasing. These online workshops are still well attended and well received, but it is clear that people are eager to meet in person once again. (In-person sessions also have better retention of participants.)

In addition, participants have requested longer workshops that go into more depth (e.g., two-day, in-person sessions) and have expressed interest in training focused on new topics such as anti-violence and trauma-informed work.

Employment Life Skills and Training Program

Providing Employment, Life Skills and Training (ELST) supports to our urban and remote communities has helped hundreds of people attain much-needed identification, licensing, and training opportunities.

ELST also removes financial barriers and increases access to computers (for job offers and applications). Transit and vehicle access is also a barrier especially in northern and remote communities and ELST coordinators are able to offer wrap-around services in multiple locations to ensure the program can reach a broad and diverse population.

This program has provided training to clients to help them start their own businesses, navigate social media management and promotion, and learn how to become financially independent. It has also helped pre-employed clients gain certification and obtain work gear needed for their positions or to further their careers.

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The ELST program has grown the number of clients served and has doubled in terms of the number of Friendship Centres eligible for funding—from seven in 2018/2019 to 14 in 2023/2024.

However, there are some Friendship Centres that don't have ELST services. With more funding, this program could serve all 25 Friendship Centres and provide these much-needed opportunities to hundreds more urban Indigenous people.

In addition, securing multi-year funding would greatly increase the program's impact, reduce job insecurity, and allow the program to deliver longer-term training.



4.9

Average rating of the 2-day workshop on Project Management and Proposal Writing

703

Clients who have gained employment, gone back to school, become self-employed, or have received training to become employed



Strengthen the unity of the Friendship Centre Movement in B.C.

Membership Meetings

Each year, BCAAFC hosts an Annual General Meeting and two additional membership meetings for our 25 Friendship Centres. This is an important opportunity for members to connect, share updates, and talk about issues and opportunities. We host workshops and discussion circles.

These are also an opportunity for us to speak and respond to decision-makers as a Friendship Centre Movement.

When and why we invite guests to our membership meetings is informed by our ongoing advocacy efforts and the opportunity these events give us to speak as a united whole—a unified movement rather than 25 Friendship Centres with different postal codes, programs, and needs.

Our 2023 AGM in Victoria featured a presentation from BC Cancer about new at-home testing and other early-detection initiatives and a plenary session about the impact of DRIPA and resulting changes in the relationship between Friendship Centres and the provincial government.

Our November 2023 meeting was tailored to the Presidents and Executive Directors of our Friendship Centres. We focused on updating the BCAAFC Constitution and Bylaws, as well as our Membership Manual.

Our February 2024 meeting featured a plenary session on children and youth with special needs as well as discussion circles with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the B.C. Seniors' Advocate, and Elections Canada.

Elders Council

The BCAAFC Elders Council advises the board and provides guidance and support within Friendship Centres and communities. It has representation from all over the province.

This year, our Elders Council was all together at the B.C. Elders gathering in Vancouver. It was a beautiful gathering of over a thousand Elders who were together to connect, share stories, and dance!

The council attended monthly Elders Lunches on Vancouver Island in Campbell River, Songhees, Tsawout, and Cowichan. They also travelled to different Friendship Centres that needed support throughout the year.

Gathering Our Voices was very well attended this year—by youth and

by Elders—and the BCAAFC Elders Council enjoyed presenting their workshop Elders Don't Bite.

BCAAFC Communications Planning

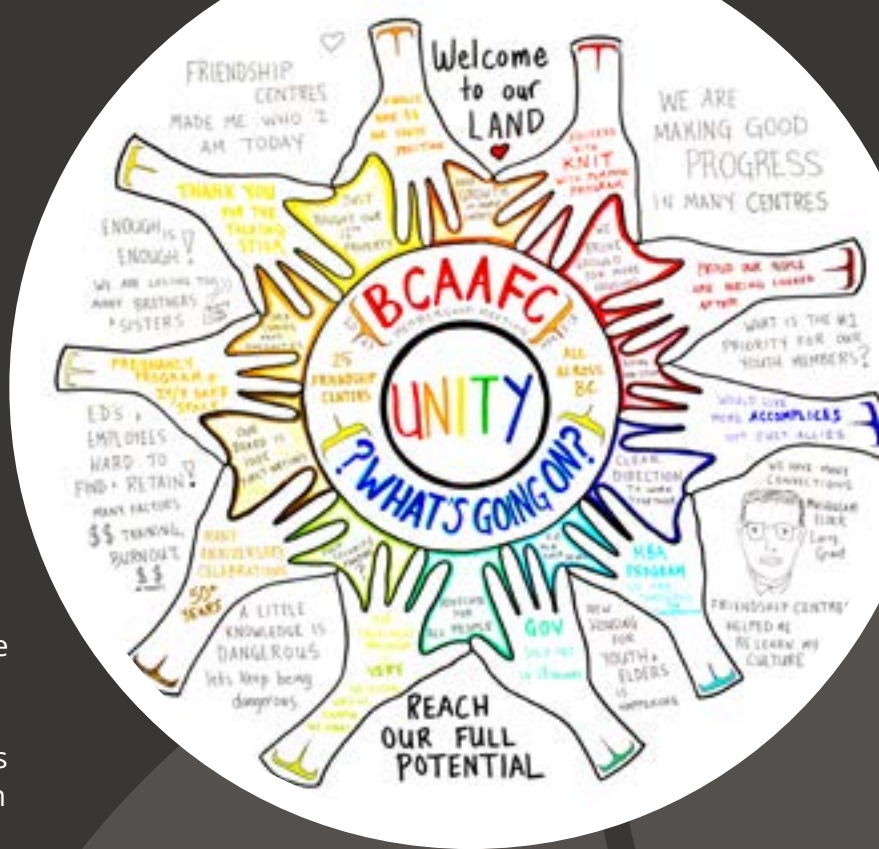
The BCAAFC Communications Team has spent the end of 2023 and the start of 2024 developing a robust and long-term Communications Plan informed by BCAAFC's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.

It maps and coordinates our communication channels, clarifies our key messages, and identifies various strategies to support the overall goal of increasing name recognition and awareness of Friendship Centres and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. These include creating a resource and template library for members, developing a crisis communications plan,

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monitoring/tracking media coverage and news stories, and building an editorial calendar to help share more Friendship Centre content.

Over the coming year, we hope to show and promote more of the high-quality, timely work that BCAAFC and our members are doing and further establish our reputation as the go-to provincial urban Indigenous non-profit organization.



Support and encourage emerging leaders

Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council

The goal of the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council (PAYC) is to create a healthier future for Indigenous youth by being a voice for young people, taking action, and making positive changes at local, provincial, and national levels—with an emphasis on youth agency and leadership development.

This year, the council doubled in size from 5 members to 10 and the number of Friendship Centres represented by PAYC has increased from 4 to 6. This has come with more ideas and goals, increased capacity but has also increased need for administrative support.

PAYC continues to work closely with the NAFC Indigenous Youth Council

and the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective to advocate at the provincial and federal levels. PAYC members also participate in community engagement sessions, connect with the youth in their communities, and help plan the annual Gathering Out Voices Youth Leadership Conference.

More support would help move PAYC closer to its goal of having representation from all 25 Friendship Centres through things like annual promotion and recruitment plans and policy analysis to support PAYC's advocacy efforts.

“Thank you for your generous support towards my economic studies! I've learned about finance, corporate governance, and systems thinking which will allow me to make informed decisions in the future! I've also had the opportunity to read great books in philosophy and psychology and maintain my personal health by staying involved in judo and lacrosse. I appreciate all of the support you have given me.”

- Bursary Recipient

Post-Secondary Student Funding

BCAAFC helps improve the socio-economic outcomes for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people by administering the First Citizens Fund (FCF) and the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP)—both of which provide eligible students with funding to access post-secondary education opportunities.

These funds remove barriers to post-secondary education by directly providing financial support. Compared

to alternatives such as loans or personal savings, they reduce the financial strain on students and increase access to post-secondary education. This year, 47 students from 18 different communities received funding through the PSSSP and 43 students from 22 different communities received funding through the FCF.

In the coming years, the development of student portals and databases would make the program more accessible and make it easier to collect and track data on program outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, funding history, program representation) to inform evidence-based policy decisions and help determine where to allocate future funding and support services.

Gathering Our Voices

Gathering Our Voices (GOV) is the only Indigenous Youth leadership event of its kind in Canada. For four days, GOV provides an opportunity for 1000 Indigenous youth to feel love, pride, hope, and connection to their larger community.

The opportunity to travel and meet other Indigenous youth and have access to such a wide range of workshops and social activities is not available at this scale anywhere else. Tickets to the event are highly anticipated and sought after. GOV 2024 sold out in under a minute!

This year we welcomed 1000 youth, 200 chaperones, and 130 volunteers. The event included over 100 workshops, 30 artisans at the Artisans Market, 90 vendors at the Career and Education Fair (including 13 post-secondaries), a dance party, a talent show, and a movie night in a rented movie theatre. We also honoured 90 young people at the Youth in Care Honouring Feast, and handed out thousands of gifts at the Great Giveaway.



\$8,800

Average amount of funding provided to recipients of the PSSSP

\$50,000

Worth of books, art supplies, sports gear, and crafts handed out at the GOV Great Giveaway



Secure long-term funding for programs, services, capital projects

One of our long-term goals at BCAAFC has been to establish a reputation as the go-to provincial urban Indigenous non-profit organization doing high-quality, timely, and impactful work. That is now paying off. Our opinion matters to decision-makers and the province is trusting us with more and more resources.

Five years of funding for Gathering Our Voices

The provincial government has committed \$10 million to fund our annual Indigenous Youth Leadership Event, Gathering Our Voices (GOV), for the next five years (starting in 2024).

This funding will help ensure we can hire a permanent team to plan and manage all aspects of GOV. It also funded the creation of the new GOV app which is making things like registration, communication, and event planning more streamlined and coordinated (which means the money

we fundraise for GOV can be dedicated elsewhere and go even further).

Path Forward Funding

In 2022, it was announced that BCAAFC would develop and administer the Path Forward Community Fund, consisting of \$5.34 million to help Indigenous communities and organizations expand safety planning capacity.

In 2023, the B.C. government provided a grant of \$5.5 million to continue the Path Forward Community Fund. Under BCAAFC's management, the fund supported 33 Indigenous-led community projects addressing

Indigenous-specific systemic causes of gender-based violence in its first two rounds of funding.

The 18 Round Three projects currently underway will close in September 2024. Due to the impact and success of this initiative, we expect the fund to continue to be renewed.

Indigenous Procurement

BCAAFC also sits on the External Advisory Committee for the provincial government's Indigenous Procurement Initiative. Our mandate, which lasts through 2025, is to help update the provincial government's procurement process in a way that increases Indigenous Peoples'

participation in the provincial government's procurement opportunities. Our goal is for Indigenous businesses, non-profits, and First Nations to apply more often and with less difficulty, be more successful, and receive more funding.

The committee includes representation from First Nations, Métis Nation, Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous businesses. The draft guide should be ready in the fall of 2024. Our goal for an updated procurement process (affecting everything from home sharing with MCFD to highway maintenance) is 2025.

Friendship Centre Housing Projects

The Quesnel Tillicum Society received funding from BC Housing for a new apartment complex dedicated to low-income people and families that will be right next to the Friendship Centre.

In Vancouver, construction is underway on an Indigenous-led and Indigenous-focused development

that will bring nearly 170 mixed-use homes and 80 shelter beds to the Downtown Eastside as well as space for two social enterprises operated by the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

The Walyaqil Tiny Shelter Village is being operated by the Port Alberni Friendship Center with funding for at least two years secured from the provincial government.

In Courtenay, the Wachiy Friendship Centre Society's housing project is nearing completion. The project will have subsidized and low-income rates and will prioritize low-income Indigenous Elders.

A partnership between the Ooknakane Friendship Centre, ASK Wellness, BC Housing, and the Penticton Indian Band has led to the snpaʔxtəntn supportive housing in Penticton which will be run and staffed by Ooknakane Friendship Centre and ASK Wellness with a \$1.8M annual operating grant.



Increase collaboration with First Nations and government

BCAAFC-CLBC Partnership

One in three Indigenous people in Canada lives with a disability. However, due to excessive levels of discrimination, historic oppression, and trauma, there is a severe lack of access to services and supports.

To help address this, BCAAFC entered into a partnership with Community Living BC in 2021. BCAAFC received funding from CLBC to carry out projects related to home sharing and procurement.

Over the past year, BCAAFC created a disability and inclusion needs assessment, which was shared with Friendship Centres in June 2023. To begin increasing Friendship Centres familiarity with CLBC services, BCAAFC collaborated with the Prince George Native Friendship Centre to organize

an engagement session and learning circle on home sharing through CLBC.

It is difficult to enact change in a short period of time. Most Friendship Centres are still becoming familiar with CLBC and its services and although CLBC continues to emphasize the importance of procurement, their process has experienced little to no change despite being identified as a major barrier to Friendship Centre participation.

As such, we have conducted a review of CLBC's procurement process and developed a comprehensive report, including recommendations for CLBC. We are also developing culturally safe and accessible resources to assist Friendship Centres (and other Indigenous service providers) with CLBC's procurement process, including the RFQ application. BCAAFC

has also begun the development of anti-racism training for CLBC service providers who support Indigenous children and youth.

Health Advocate

The BCAAFC Health Advocate works with the government and other institutions to affect change in policy, legislation, programming, and service delivery and increase cultural safety and health knowledge in our communities.

Over the past year, the BCAAFC Health Advocate has helped develop and deliver Indigenous resources and self-testing/screening resources for cancer and sexually transmitted infections as well as minimum standards of service for overdose prevention services, school food programs, and youth substance use care.

According to anecdotal testimony gathered from workshops and at BCAAFC membership meetings, clients and Friendship Centres are very happy to have someone representing them in these spaces.

AIDP and ASCD

The Aboriginal Infant Development Programs (AIDP) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs (ASCD) Provincial Office is hosted by BCAAFC. It provides support and educational information to programs, provides training opportunities and professional development funds. The Provincial Office also works with community partners and the government to advocate and bring forward the needs and priorities of ASCD and AIDP programs.

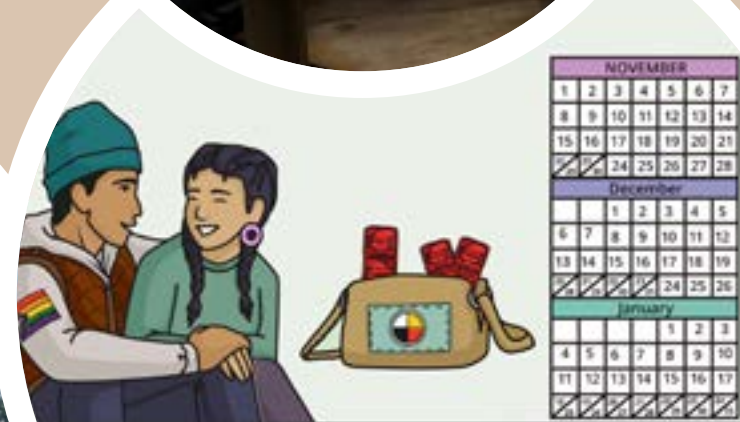
The AIDP/ASCD team continues to sit on several provincial committees to ensure that the voice of Indigenous children is heard by policy-makers and

program planners. These include the BC Healthy Child Development Alliance, Feelings First Indigenous Advisory, First Call ECD Round Table, Family Support Institute, Indigenous CYSN Advisory, and the CLBC Indigenous Advisory Committee.

This year, the Provincial Office restructured its Advisory Committee to ensure that it is guided by Regional Advisors from AIDP/ASCD programs. This change ensures that the office is supported by members who have worked in a front-line capacity with Indigenous children and families.

In March, the team visited the site of the ASCD for the Squamish Nation, which provided a great opportunity to develop future plans and discuss training opportunities.

In addition to meetings and regional trainings, the Provincial Office is also planning to survey all AIDP/ASCD programs to get updated information and regional data to ensure our priorities continue to be aligned with the needs of families.



"And it's a good idea to have a plan, like having safer sex and getting tested every 3-6 months. Have honest talks with your partners. You're not alone. STIs are part of life."

Improve our ability to deliver high quality services across the province

Path Forward Community Fund

The Path Forward Community Fund seeks to increase community safety planning and capacity building to ensure the self-determination of Indigenous communities in addressing Indigenous-specific causes of gender-based violence.

Funding was renewed for 2023-24 and 20 additional organizations received funding. In total, over 50 programs have been funded and added options and supports to Indigenous people in their home communities.

These grants are helping fill a gap in funding and services for gender-based violence specifically for Indigenous people. In many cases, these funds have allowed communities to offer entirely new programming where

none existed before. This funding also helps ensure that services and supports for Indigenous people are accessible and designed and delivered in culturally safe ways.

These grants were specifically designed to be Indigenous-led and to allow for the incubation of new ideas and programs. Having this funding distributed by an Indigenous organization is also an important shift in how the government sees their role in this work—giving Indigenous

“We have a consistent group of fathers who are coming to the weekly drop-in group. They are creating a healthy network around them and access other programs, like Mental Health and Addictions Counsellor, the Aboriginal Infant and Early Childhood Development Program, and our Community Integration Specialist. The fathers also like to bring their children to the group, and they share and role-model their parenting skills.”

- Path Forward Fund Recipient

communities the space and resources to design and implement their own strategies and services.

Anti-Racism Facilitation Training

In early 2024, registration opened for a new training program focused on anti-racist facilitation at Vancouver Community College (VCC). This program, a partnership between VCC and BCAAFC, combines both in-person and online instruction and is designed

to help people develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to effectively respond to anti-Indigenous racism in their organizations.

In addition to the specific anti-racist facilitation competencies, this course also provides intensive training on effective instructional design, teaching, and facilitation skills, along with a foundational understanding of adult learning theories.

Sponsorship opportunities for tuition and accommodation costs for the pilot program were available for participants affiliated with Friendship Centres.

MBA in Indigenous Reconciliation

Our custom-built Masters of Business Administration in Indigenous

Annual General Report

Reconciliation continues at the University of Victoria. The inaugural cohort is about to enter their second year of the program and we are preparing to open applications for a second cohort.

This program has been a dream of ours for a long time and is a key part of our reconciliation framework and action plan (alongside tools for reporting racism, organizational assessments, and anti-racism training). It will build capacity, increase cultural safety, and support succession planning in the community social services sector—all combining to support safer and increased access to social services for Indigenous people across the province.

And half of the first cohort of students are associated with our member Friendship Centres!



20
Organizations received Path Forward Grants in 2023-24



Friendship Centre Reporting

21 out of 25 Friendship Centres had reported at the time of printing

Friendship Centre Leadership

BCAAFC is an Indigenous-led organization and each of our 25 Friendship Centres are also Indigenous-led. Each has a Board of Directors that volunteers their time to guide the organization's strategic direction and build relationships with

community, government, and other stakeholders. There are **154 people** currently serving on these Boards of Directors and together, they have a combined total of **836 years** of board governance experience.

154
People serving on Friendship Centre Boards of Directors

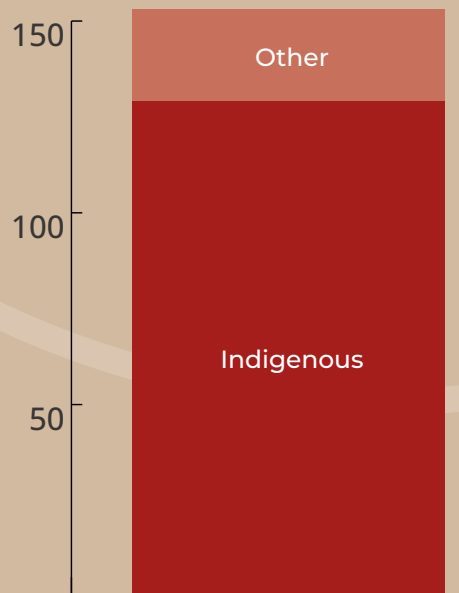
Volunteering

The Friendship Centre Movement has benefitted greatly from the time and energy of volunteers and we are very grateful for their ongoing contributions to our programs, organizations, and communities.

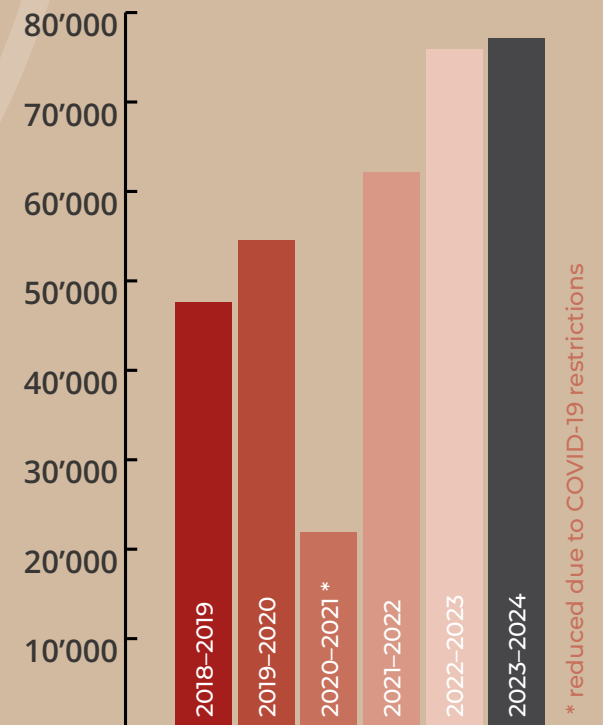
A total of **2421 different people** volunteered their time, ideas, and expertise in support of B.C. Friendship centres in 2023-2024.

2421
Friendship Centre volunteers for 2023-24

Cultural Identity of Board Members



Total Volunteer Hours



2066

**Total number of
Friendship Centre
members**

1453

**Total number of
voting Friendship
Centre members**

836

**Combined years of
experience held by all
25 Friendship Centre
Boards of Directors**

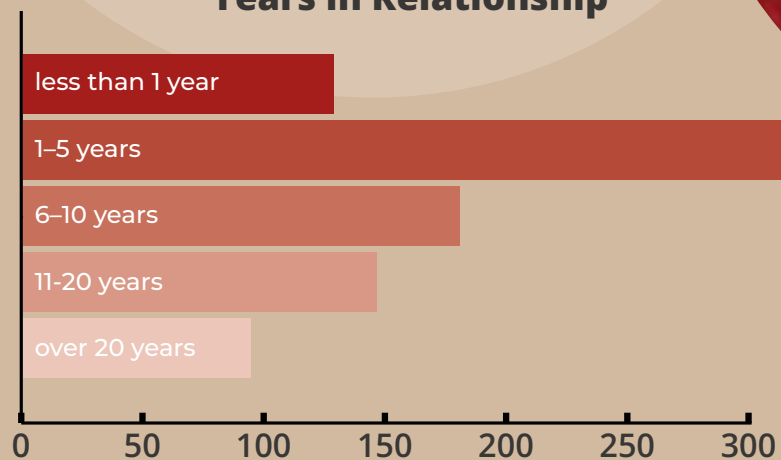
33

Partnerships

Friendship Centres are continuously building relationships and establishing respectful partnerships with various organizations, businesses, and government at the local, regional, and national level.

These partnerships support the wellbeing and prosperity of urban Indigenous people through things like project grants, information sharing, and collaborative programs.

Years in Relationship





Cariboo Friendship Society Dance and Dinner



Lillooet Friendship Centre Society Food Bank Hampers



Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Center Society Girls Leadership Program



Port Alberni Friendship Center Baby Welcoming



Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society



Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society Orange Shirt Day



Wachiay Friendship Centre Society Multi-Generation Drum Making



Tansi Friendship Centre Society Elder and Youth Bannock Making



Cariboo Friendship Society Orange Shirt Day Event



Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Society Youth Leadership Group



Victoria Native Friendship Centre



Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society Indigenous People's Day Circle

Friendship Centre Reporting

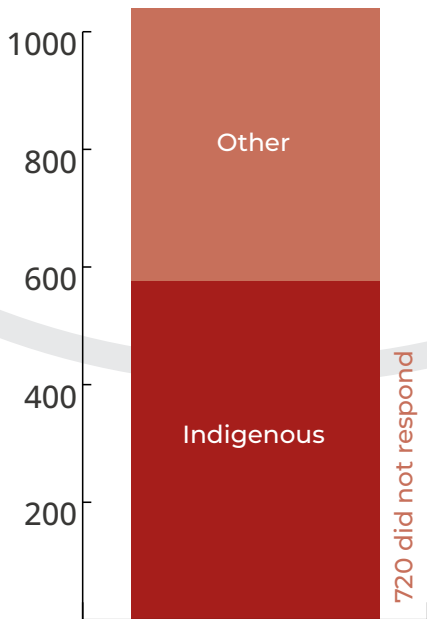
21 out of 25 Friendship Centres had reported at the time of printing

Staffing

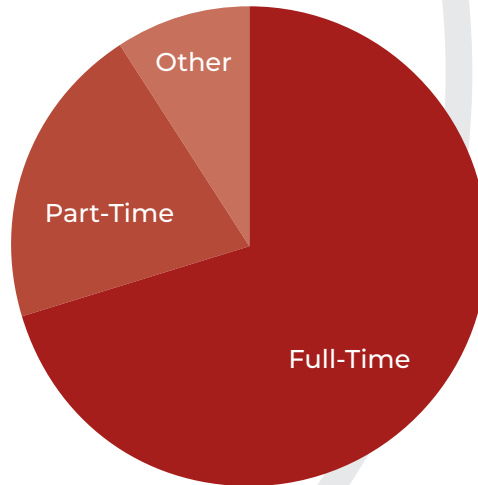
The Friendship Centre Movement is made up of over 100 Friendship Centres from coast to coast.

Our 25 B.C. Friendship Centres currently represent over 1,700 employees and over 1,000,000 client interactions each year.

Cultural Identity of Staff



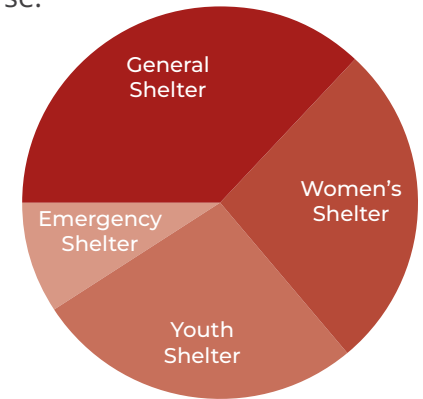
Employment Status of Staff



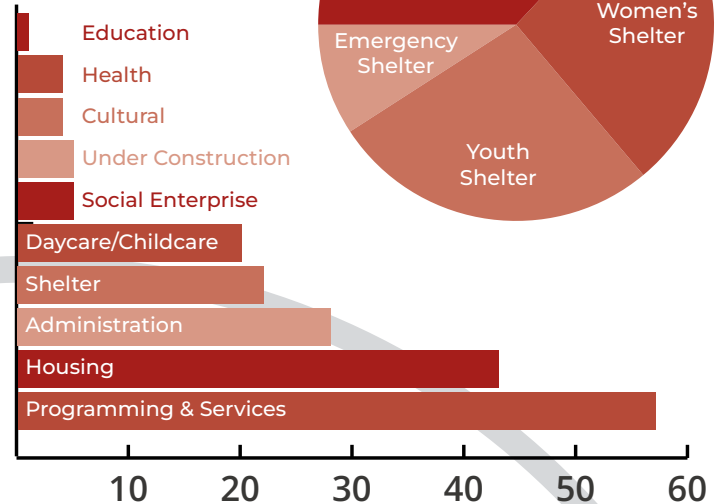
Facilities

Our Friendship Centres manage and operate **120 facilities** in communities across the province. The number of facilities has increased steadily over the past decade and the uses and programming types are very diverse.

Shelter Spaces



Facility Uses



1759
Total staff employed by our 25 Friendship Centres

Program/Service Areas

Friendship Centres are incredibly responsive and excel at adapting to the evolving needs of our communities.

- Addictions
- Advocacy
- AIDP/ASCD
- AIDS/HIV
- Apprenticeship
- Arts & Craft
- Bullying/Harassment
- Business Development
- Cancer
- Childcare
- Clinical (e.g., Nurse Practitioner)
- Computer Skills
- Cultural Events
- Daycare
- Disability Supports
- Domestic/Family/Dating Violence

- Elder Events
- Elder Supports
- Employment Readiness Training
- Events
- Family Support
- FASD
- Financial Literacy
- Food Security
- Fraud/Safety Awareness
- Highschool Upgrading
- Homelessness
- Housing
- Justice
- Language
- Literacy
- Maternal Child Health

- Mental Health
- Multimedia training
- Music
- Nutrition
- Parenting
- Preschool
- Sexual Violence/Abuse
- Smoking Cessation
- Social Enterprise
- Sports & Recreation
- Trafficking/Exploitation
- Women's Shelter
- Youth/Teen

Most Offered Services 2023-24

1. Family Support
2. Advocacy
3. Mental Health
4. Cultural Events
5. Elders Supports

Most Accessed Services 2023-24

1. Family Support
2. Advocacy
3. Mental Health
4. Cultural Events
5. Food Security





Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert Youth Literacy Day



Fort St. John Friendship Society Elders Christmas Luncheon



Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association Hiking Group



Quesnel Tillicum Society Orange Shirt Day Event



Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society Christmas Lunch



Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society



Steph and Noella hosting the DAFGP Table



BCAAFC Christmas Office Decorating



Joe, Corporate Morale Team Lead

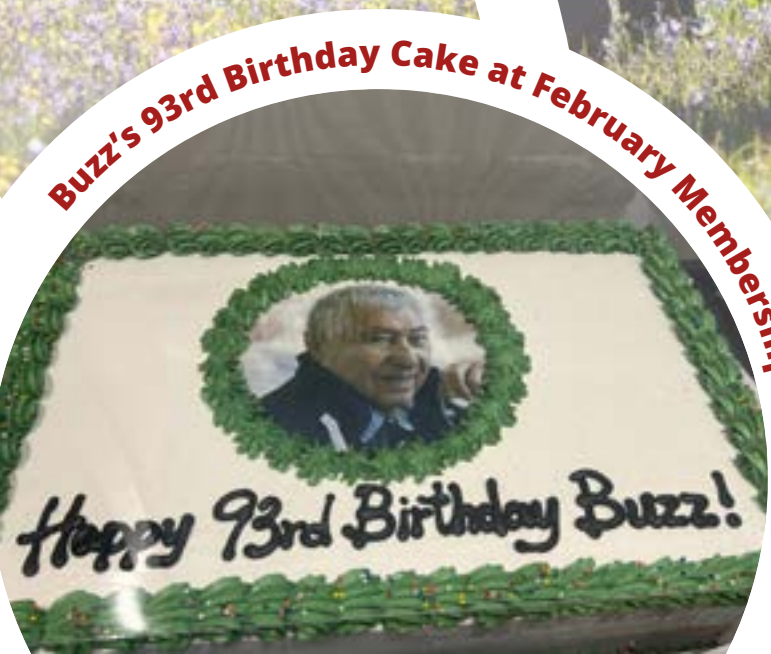


The BCAAFC Team preparing for Gathering Our Voices



BCAAFC Health and Family Services Team

Robert, BCAAFC Unpaid Intern



Buzz's 93rd Birthday Cake at February Membership Meeting



BCAAFC Halloween Team



Board of Directors 2023/2024

Annette Morgan, President

Rosanna McGregor, Vice President

Kari Hutchison, Treasurer

Cal Albright, Secretary

Jadyn Rae McLean, Youth Rep

Cyndi Stevens, NAFC BC Rep

Tami Omeasoo, Director

Carol Camille, Director

Shirley C Ivanauskas-Ward, Director

Tony Goulet, Director

Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre

Cariboo Friendship Centre

Victoria Native Friendship Centre

Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Centre

Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre

Port Alberni Friendship Center

Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society

Lillooet Friendship Centre Society

Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association

Quesnel Tillicum Society

Elders Council

Marge White 'Na-cha-uks'
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society

Basil 'Buzz' Morissette
Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society

Wally Samuel
Port Alberni Friendship Center

Stanley Namox
Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society



The BCAAFC Team

Alicia Carlow

Gender-Based Violence Advocate

Avril Hull

Member Services Administrator

Charlie George

Elders Support & Cultural Advisor

Dalious McCullough

Member Services Program Assistant

Debbie Solomon

Finance Assistant

Dixie Hunt-Scott

AIDP Provincial Advisor

Draven Clemah

Gathering Our Voices Assistant

Emilie Luhowy

Path Forward Assistant

Jacquie Snelling-Welsh

Health & Family Services Team Lead

Jean Wylie

GOV Registration Coordinator

Jenn Douglass

Office Manager

Jessica Mugford

AIDP/ASCD Provincial Office Assistant

Julie Robertson

General Manager

Kelsey Pinch

Gender-Based Violence Research Coordinator

Laura Alfaro

Gender-Based Violence Research Coordinator

Leslie Varley

Executive Director



Marissa Jim
Melissa Reinhardt
Michael Sharratt
Nathan Ponce
Nicole Hall
Nikki Scott
Noella Horoscoe
Rebecca Lang
Richard Stern
Richelle Williams
Rona Sterling Collins
Stephanie Cameron-Johnson
Terri Stachowicz
Tom Davis
Vanessa Daniels
Victor Mema
Yvonne Trott

Doula Program Assistant
Research and Data Analyst
GOV Workshop Coordinator
PAYC and Education Coordinator
Communications Officer
Childcare Planner
Health Advocate
Human Resources & Special Projects Team Lead
IT Coordinator
GOV Event Manager
ASCD Provincial Advisor
Doula Assistant & Gathering Our Voices Registration
Friendship Centre Contract Manager
GOV Producer
Employment Program Coordinator
Financial Controller
ELST Coordinator

Funder Acknowledgements

DAFGP

Thank you to the Ministry of Health, the Provincial Health Services Authority, the First Nations Health Authority, Island Health, and Northern Health for supporting the Doulas for Aboriginal Families Grant Program.

Path Forward Fund

Thank you to the Community Safety and Victim Services Branch of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General for your support.

AIDP/ASCD

Thank you to the Ministry of Children and Family Development for supporting the Aboriginal Infant Development & Aboriginal Support Child Development Provincial Office.

Health Advocate

Thank you to the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions for supporting the BCAAFC Health Advocate positions and the important work they do.

PAYC

Thanks to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for your ongoing support of the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council.

Telus Mobility for Good

Thank you to Telus for supporting the Mobility for Good Program and providing prepaid cell phones to Indigenous women and girls who otherwise would not have access to cellular communication while fleeing violence.

PSSSP

Thank you to Indigenous Services Canada for continuing to provide funding for the Postsecondary Student Support Program.

ELST

Thanks to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education & Future Skills for continuing to provide funding for our Employment, Life Skills, and Training Program.

FCF Student Bursary

Thank you to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for providing funding for the The First Citizens Fund Student Bursary Program.

FC Training Program

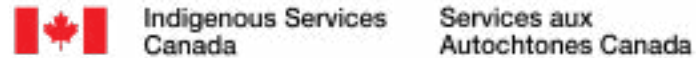
Thank you to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for supporting our Friendship Centre Training Program.

Gathering Our Voices

Thank you to the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, the Government of Canada (Family Violence Prevention Program) and the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth of BC for providing funding for GOV.

Child Care Planner

Thank you to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for funding the BCAAFC Child Care Planner position and the important work it does.





NAFC

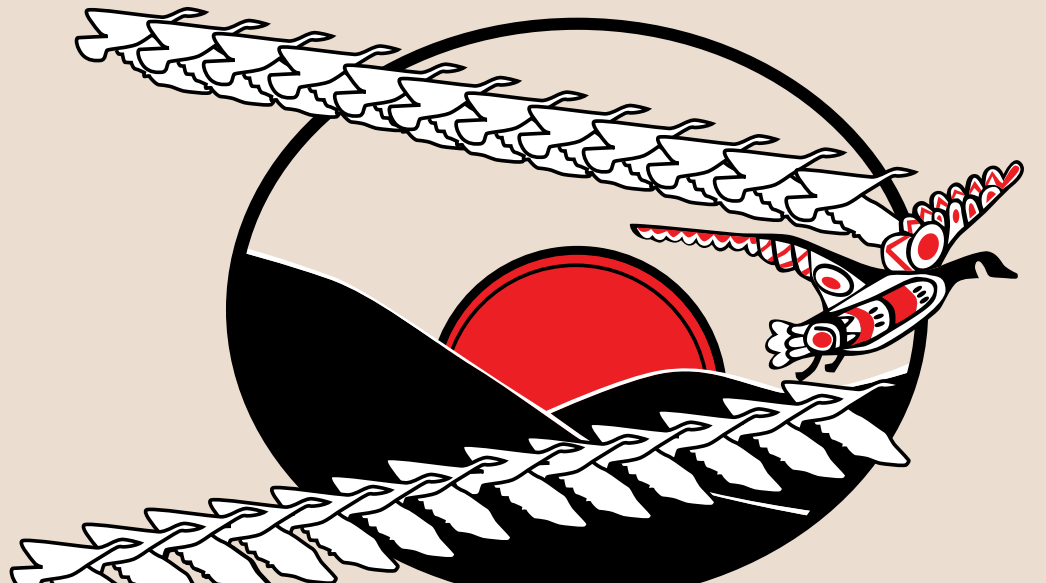
BCAAFC is a proud member of the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC).

Thank you to the NAFC Team for their guidance, advocacy, and support.

We are so grateful for everything you do and we are so proud of the shared success of our growing urban Indigenous family.



National Association
of Friendship Centres





BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

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