

BC Association of Aboriginal  
Friendship Centres  
**BCA AFC**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Friendship Centres work to provide essential services during COVID-19 pandemic**

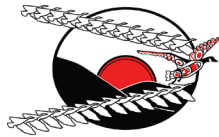
**VICTORIA, B.C.** – Friendship Centres are experiencing an increase in requests for services from First Nations communities and vulnerable populations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collectively, Friendship Centres are the largest infrastructure serving urban Indigenous populations across Canada, providing services critical to the health and wellbeing of their clients for almost 70 years. At their core, Friendship Centres are committed to a brighter future for all, helping whoever walks through their doors in need of supports, no matter their ancestry or Indigenous status.

“We do what we can for all Indigenous people, and when we are in times of emergency, like this COVID-19 pandemic, we pull together, and do our very best to address the increased need for services,” Leslie Varley, Executive Director of the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCA AFC), is working alongside the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) to secure supports for centres providing essential and urgent services to communities. The NAFC is submitting a funding proposal to the federal government on behalf of Friendship Centres nation-wide, in hopes of receiving a portion of the \$15 million in emergency funding allocated for urban Indigenous organizations.

The 25 Friendship Centres located in B.C. have a history of supporting people during times of crisis, some serving as evacuation support centres during intense wildfire seasons. During this pandemic, Friendship Centres are continuing to provide essential services whenever possible, and many are working to fulfill additional urgent needs, such as shelter services for people experiencing homelessness. Other Friendship Centres are reaching out to ensure neighbouring Indigenous communities have access to services that other groups and organizations are not providing for.

The BCA AFC is requesting additional supports from the provincial government and seeking opportunities to collaborate with other organizations and governing bodies to ensure



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Indigenous and Métis people, wherever they reside, are not suffering due to jurisdictional boundaries.

The backgrounder attached outlines the requests made by Friendship Centres in order to safely provide essential and urgent services.

## **Contact**

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