



**BCAAFC | BC Association of  
Aboriginal Friendship Centres**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Indigenous Youth Leadership Training Needs More Funding**

*The annual Gathering Our Voices event only has half the funding required to support 2,000 youth*

**B.C.** — October 9, 2019 — Registration for Gathering Our Voices (GOV): Indigenous Youth Leadership Training sells out every year. The growing demand for the event speaks to the positive impact it has on the Indigenous youth who attend. Unfortunately, while demand for the event has increased, funding has lagged behind, forcing co-hosts to lower the number of tickets released for GOV 2020 registration. Registration opened at 10:00 AM PST this morning and hit capacity in three minutes.

Indigenous youth in Canada are at disproportionately higher risk of suicide, addiction, unemployment, incarceration, and being placed in care. GOV alleviates these risks by providing a unique opportunity for Indigenous youth leaders, ages 14 to 24, to connect with culture, their peers, and tools to support their success.

There are approximately 1,900 youth on the registration waitlist at this time, including groups from on and off-reserve, primarily in British Columbia, but extending all across Canada. Co-hosts have half the funding needed to support 2,000 youth at the GOV 2020 event.

“Every year we are challenged to raise the funds for an event which we know has a preventative effect on the risks that Indigenous youth face,” says Leslie Varley, Executive Director of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, event co-host, “the youth who experience GOV tell us their younger siblings dream of attending the event when they are old enough.”

The event brings together Indigenous leaders, educational institutions, industry, public agencies and government departments for the four-day celebration of culture that connects Indigenous youth with leadership resources. The BCAAFC is working with partners to secure funding to open spots for waitlisted youth. Many youth groups spend the year fundraising to attend GOV.

The BCAAFC co-hosts the event with the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council (PAYC) and the local Friendship Centre. GOV 2020 is set to take place March 16-19 on Secwépemc traditional territory in Kamloops, BC, with the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society.

To learn more about sponsorship opportunities for Gathering Our Voices, visit <https://gatheringourvoices.ca/sponsorship/>, or contact:

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