



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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Annual ‘Gathering Our Voices’ Indigenous Youth Leadership Event to Return in 2022**

**B.C. – October 20, 2020** – Over 1,000 Indigenous youth look forward to attending the Gathering Our Voices (GOV) leadership training event each year. The 18<sup>th</sup> annual GOV event was cancelled in March, just days before it was set to take place, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in B.C. and across Canada. Organizers have made the decision to postpone GOV until 2022 to ensure a safe return.

The event is co-hosted by the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council (PAYC) and the B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC). The 25 Friendship Centres across B.C. have continued to provide increasingly necessary social services throughout COVID-19, many of them adapting their youth programming to continue online.

“Ensuring Indigenous youth have access to resources that support their success is vital to achieving a healthier, more equitable society,” said Leslie Varley, Executive Director of the BCAAFC. “Listening to the voices of Indigenous youth is a key part of implementing the calls to action and justice we continue to fight for.”

GOV encourages youth to mobilize their collective strengths and create the change they want to see. Indigenous youth are carrying on the spirit of the event in the face of challenges exasperated by the pandemic. Registration for the 3C Challenge, an entrepreneurship initiative by the BCAAFC, has increased since the training moved to an online platform in March. The resulting business ventures reflect Indigenous youths’ drive to create economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable products and services, grounded in their cultures and traditions.

The GOV 2022 event will coincide with the BCAAFC’s 50-year anniversary. Varley said organizers look forward to gathering together again, “We raise our hands in the Coast Salish way, in high respect and appreciation, to the youth, staff, volunteers, partners, and funders who come together to make this event a huge success.”

**For media and event sponsorship inquiries, please contact [communications@bcaafc.com](mailto:communications@bcaafc.com).**

-30-

**To learn more about BC Friendship Centres and Gathering Our Voices, please visit [bcaafc.com](http://bcaafc.com) and [gatheringourvoices.ca](http://gatheringourvoices.ca).**