

# **Employment, Life Skills, & Training**

**Final Report 2020-21: Our Shared Efforts**





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A BC Friendship Centres Program

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*The Outreach Crew at Kermode Friendship Centre Society.*



*Prince George Native Friendship Centre.*

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# BC Friendship Centres

## The BC Friendship Centre Movement

Approximately 80-85% of Indigenous people living in BC live off-reserve (roughly 220,000 out of a total of 270,000). For 70 years, the 25 BC Friendship Centres have provided Status-blind support to First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and other community members seeking services. Collectively, BC Friendship Centres reported over one million client interactions in 2019, with 4,550 clients a week coming through their doors to participate in over 550 programs.

In 2020, the BC Friendship Centres faced and met unprecedented community needs around food security, continued employment services, skills and training, and provided health, wellness and cultural supports as the impacts of COVID-19 continued and intensified.

Despite the ongoing challenges and difficulties, the Friendship Centres stepped up, adapted quickly, and continued to provide crucial services safely. While a few centres were forced to close their physical doors temporarily, they quickly pivoted to provide online and telephone supports.



*Walking and softening the dry meat at Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society.*

# BC Friendship Centre Locations:

*Friendship Centres delivering the Employment, Life Skills, & Training Program are in bold.*

## BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC)

As the umbrella organization for the Friendship Centres across BC, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022, and continue working to promote, develop and deliver accessible programs and services that support Indigenous people living in urban areas and away from home.



- 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 Center Society**
- Victoria Native Friendship Centre**
- Wachiay Friendship Centre Society (Courtenay)**



# Employment, Life Skills, & Training

Indigenous people in BC face multiple barriers to employment, education, and economic opportunities. The BCAAFC has long recognized the gaps in representation and opportunities for Indigenous people in the BC labour market. To address these challenges, and help improve the lives of Indigenous people in BC, the BCAAFC’s 5X5 Aboriginal Jobs Plan was initiated in 2014, based on five pillars: Social and Economic Innovation, Education, Employment Services, Partnerships, and Operational Capacity and Measurement. To recognize the unique barriers of northern communities, seven Northern Corridor Employment and Training Centres (Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, Fort St. John, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace, and Smithers) were established in 2017 through a partnership with the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation as one of the initiatives of the 5X5 plan. In 2018, the Northern Corridor Initiative became a partnership with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training through the Indigenous Skills, Training, and Development Fund, and due to its success rate and efficacy, the initiative was extended through to March 2020.

In June 2020, the Northern Corridor Initiative evolved into the Employment, Life Skills, and Training (ELST) Program, through a continued partnership with the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training. The ELST program is delivered in 15 Friendship Centres, including the seven Northern Corridor Friendship Centres.

Despite the challenges of COVID restrictions in 2020, seven new ELST Coordinators were hired, eight new programs were developed, and all 15 programs successfully adapted their services to implement COVID safety plans.

Through ELST funding, Friendship Centres provide a culturally safe environment that reduces barriers to employment, life skills and training services for urban Indigenous people. In a single visit, clients may access multiple, in-house,

“wrap-around” supports such as addictions and mental wellness counseling, housing assistance, cultural programs, daycares, foodbanks, and more.

A common “Domino Effect” success story is that a client may come in for one service, but receive in-house referrals for multiple supports, which can lead to sustainable employment, stable housing, children being returned, and families reunited.



*“Two of our clients are twin youth brothers who were without housing. We referred them to our youth program at PGNFC. The ELST program assisted with training, resume writing, and interview assistance. Both brothers gained employment and housing, and both drop in to volunteer and do check-ins.”*

**Prince George Native Friendship Centre ELST Coordinator**



# Program Highlights



**3225** Points of Service



**312**  
Received Gear and Equipment



**248**  
Cultural Supports Accessed



**408**  
Referrals to In-House Programs and Services



**504**  
Life Skills Supports Accessed



**67**  
Educational Upgrades Achieved



**240**  
Positive Employment Outcomes

# April 2020 to May 2021



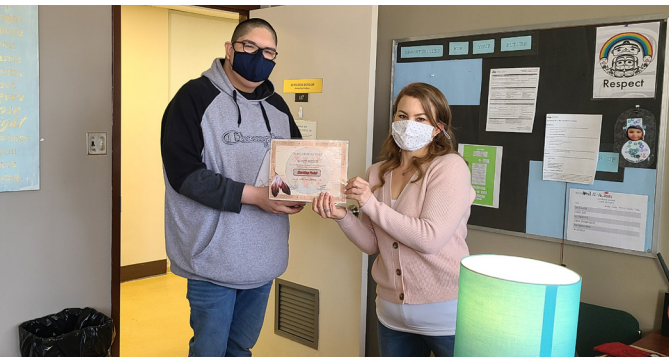
**957**  
Clients



**2056**  
Employment Supports Accessed



**1493**  
Trainings and Certifications



*ELST Program Graduation at Pringe George Native Friendship Centre.*



*Fort St. John Friendship Centre staff making hampers for community members.*





## Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre (Smithers)

*"I am so happy I was able to get what I needed to leave my cashier job and become a support worker! Best decision of my life!"*

ELST Client



### Responding to COVID-19

The Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre has been all hands on deck to meet community needs due to the impacts of COVID, providing food hampers, wellness kits, assisting with COVID benefits applications, helping youth get computer and Zoom ready for schooling and employment, and providing a breakfast program.

### Accessible Training

Due to in-person restrictions and necessary adherence to a safety plan, the ELST Coordinator focused on finding opportunities for clients to take trainings and certifications, as space and opportunities were limited, and programs filled quickly. Many clients did not want to take on camp work, as

COVID outbreaks were common in nearby worksites, and travel was restricted, or would not allow them to support their families properly due to the need for quarantining after camp. Transportation for employment has always been a huge barrier in the north, and was greatly exacerbated by COVID.

### ELST Program Highlights

The most important ELST services for clients were work gear, resume writing, and computer skills. A strong partnership with the local community college helped clients access educational upgrading and online training. Positive impacts of ELST programs on participants include increased confidence, positive outlooks, financial stability, a sense of accomplishment, and determination to succeed.

### What's Ahead

Once restrictions lift, the coordinator would like to have more on-site, in-person trainings, especially for driving courses, as it is common for community members to need to drive up to 60km for work opportunities. The coordinator would also like to organize work fairs, increase tech access and training for clients, and grow employer and community partnerships that were interrupted by COVID.



*"I worked with a client who has been 'stuck' in her position for some time. She was actively seeking other employment, but just hadn't found the right fit, as she wanted to work somewhere where she could make a difference, leave a positive footprint in the lives of others, and showcase her skills. After a long wait, we were finally able to get her a ticket that allowed her to take on the role of a support worker in the community of Smithers. I am so proud of this client, taking on responsibilities and holding her head high, to tell the world she is making a difference and is proud of what she does."*

ELST Coordinator





## Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society

*"We helped a client to get into a power engineering program at Thompson River University. I was able to help him apply for grants, and he was successful in obtaining quite a few to help with his tuition. He passed both tests, and has completed his final project. He recently applied with a Fort Nelson-owned company, Dai Tai for the Clarke Lake Geothermal project, and hopes to move back to his community and work for his nation"*

ELST Coordinator

### Responding to COVID-19

With the onset of COVID, opportunities for employment and training were greatly limited in Fort Nelson. Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society (FNAFS) had to close for some time and renovate in order to adhere to new safety measures. Once safety measures were in place, and appointment-only services resumed, FNAFS staff came together to provide food security programs, support day school applications, and host a vaccine clinic.

### Supporting Career Transitions

The ELST Coordinator focused on assisting clients with re-training for career changes, educational upgrades, and life skills supports.

Assistance in obtaining ID, soft skills, and work gear were impactful for participants. Tickets and certifications for existing opportunities were also provided.

Life skills are of increasing importance in Fort Nelson, and cultural activities provided by the centre go hand-in-hand with wellness and health supports. As in all northern communities, transportation is a huge barrier to employment in Fort Nelson, so driving lessons and licensing are a priority.

Computer skills and training are also a huge focus as opportunities move online. Stable internet and tech resources are scarce in the north, so there is an ongoing need to provide more access

and resources at the centre. A solid partnership with the local community college allowed many clients to upgrade successfully.

The ELST Coordinator notes: "There is only one training centre that does tickets here, and instructors have to come from out of town, so opportunities are few and far between. Many things are not available because of travel restrictions, so plans and programs had to be put on hold."

### What's Ahead

Going forward, as restrictions lift, the ELST Coordinator would like to change focus from tickets and certifications to developing a cohort program, with a focus on financial literacy, cultural components, computer skills, and computer access.

*"We had someone do an online log building with dovetail joinery course, and we can't wait to see him demonstrate his new skills out in our community."*

ELST Coordinator



ELST- supported fire suppression training at Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society (photo credit: Lycrecia Adin).





## Fort St. John Friendship Centre

*"My clients, a couple, just moved back to Fort St. John and were struggling with addictions, trying to find work, and getting reunited with their child. They came to see me, and I recommended they talk with our in-house addictions counselor first. After they started that, we moved on to making resumes, going over housing options, and a job search. As of now, they are in housing, reunited with their child, and the father has an upcoming interview with a local company."*

ELST Coordinator

### Responding to COVID-19

The Fort St. John Friendship Centre was at full capacity pre-COVID, and COVID restrictions further limited the ability to hold in-person workshops. The centre has been prioritizing food security programs and wellness supports, as well as a vaccine clinic and assistance with benefits applications.

### Helping to Support a Healthy Foundation for Learning

As the industry sector provides most of the employment opportunities in Fort St. John, the ELST Coordinator has been providing trainings, certifications, and one-on-one assistance to help participants overcome challenges and barriers to employment, with support from other in-house

Friendship Centre services and assistance in obtaining basic needs such as housing, food security, and childcare before moving on to employment goals.

The ELST Coordinator notes the value of the breakfast and food security programs, "I think having access to breakfast every day helps clients start off their day in a positive way. When we were allowed to do this indoors, and when weather allows us to do this outdoors once again, it also gives an opportunity to socialize. I find that starting a new course or job can be very expensive for clients, and sometimes they have to choose which bills they pay, or don't pay every month, so if I can take some financial pressure off them so that they can

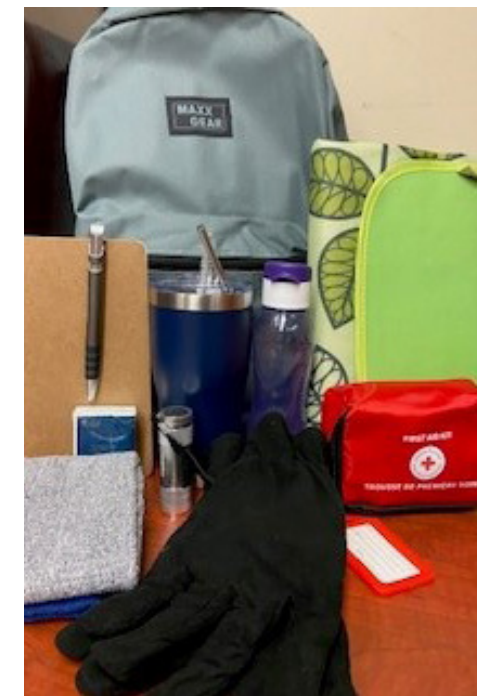
continue to work, I think that is so important. This program impacts my community by giving them a helping hand in moving toward employment goals to become self-sufficient."

### What's Ahead

Once COVID restrictions lift, the ELST Coordinator would like to implement a permanent drivers' license program, partner with a literacy society to hold computer classes, increase phone and childcare access, and set up more on-site work experience for clients, as well as reinstate cultural gathering in the Friendship Centre Hall, which have been greatly missed.

*"Thank you for getting me in to the course I needed to get this camp job! I am excited to be heading out and working for the season, but there are still some tickets I need to advance, so I'll call you when I get back."*

ELST Client







## Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert

*“There is a family with three children taking part in the Aboriginal Infant Development programming here. I was asked to come down and speak to the parents about their interests and time available to work, and give them some ideas of opportunities they could apply for. I was able to help place the father into employment, their housing has now stabilized, he is still working, and I see them around town with a positive change in attitude.”*

ELST Coordinator

### Addressing Community Needs

At the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert (FHAPR), the ELST Coordinator provides a mix of one-on-one client supports, and supports the weekly “Dudes Club” program with 25 participants, a proven model for men at risk of homelessness or without housing. The program improves the health and wellness of participants through dialogue and life skills supports in order to increase their chances of securing stable housing and employment.

### Responding to COVID-19

The Friendship Centre building closed to the general public in adherence of COVID safety measures, so service delivery

was moved to phone calls, and online. As COVID intensified in the community, leadership at the FHAPR commenced a massive undertaking to build and roll out confidential software which allowed staff to interact with clients virtually. Following up with clients is of the utmost importance, and can be challenging as email addresses and phone numbers change, so the software and BCAAFC database assisted greatly with remote delivery.

### Fostering Relationships

The ELST Coordinator notes: “Having a very positive relationship with each First Nation on Tsimshian and Nisga’a territory is very important. Using my existing network of relationships, the snowball effect from placing

community members into meaningful opportunities has led to clients passing my information off to their family and friends for completely confidential, non-judgmental remote service. We develop a game plan together on what to apply for, go over a lot of soft skills, like the importance of eye contact and dressing for success, and role-play around how to get to decision makers when applying. Through my networks, developed over time in my position, I connect them directly with opportunities at community employers. Many employers do not want hard-copy applications, so for clients with limited tech, computer access and skills are key. Following up after a client applies is really important, as it shows them that you care,

and drives home the point that following up with employers creates momentum that results in employment, especially to encourage them to try again if they are not successful the first time. Perseverance is a common theme in our stories here, as there can be 70 applications to one successful placement.”

*“Thank you for everything, especially for believing in me when I didn’t believe in myself. Thank you for following up and everything you do, I got a job!”*

ELST Client



*A three-year evaluation found that Indigenous men derive particular benefits from the Dudes Club program, including increased trust in people, social/peer support, and connection to heritage and culture.*





## Hiiye'yu Lelum Friendship Centre (Duncan)

### Responding to COVID-19

The Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) in Duncan implemented a brand new ELST position and programming in adherence with COVID restrictions and safety measures. Their multi-week program for cohorts of 12 combines life skills coaching, skills training, cultural activities, online literacy, educational upgrades, and certifications for a Building Services worker program.

### Wraparound Supports

Participants were also referred to in-house services such as family support workers and addictions counselors as necessary. Tablets were distributed for use, as many participants had barriers to technology access. This

program was very impactful for the Friendship Centre, and the participants. The ELST Coordinator emphasis the significance of the program: "One participant said she didn't realized how depressed or 'not feeling alive' she was until she came into the program, where she had a purpose to wake up, get dressed, and get ready for class. Even with COVID hanging over us, she felt great and alive. Another participant used to hate introducing herself, as she was adopted and in foster families all her life. We introduced the family tree, of how we are all connected, with Elders guiding the process. The Elder spoke for four hours to this person, reconnecting with her and re-establishing her curiosity and pride in her family and culture."

*"Our client had no confidence in her computer skills, and wouldn't consider office work, but stayed in contact and took more courses with us. I took the resume she made in the program, and got her a temporary job in office work at Cowichan Tribes. She is so proud and excited! This is the second program she's taken with us, and second time she has obtained a job that she couldn't see herself in. I believe she gains more confidence each time and is well on her way to secure employment now."*

**ELST Coordinator**

*"A young man in our program had his head down, and spoke very softly, as he was unsure of himself. He was just starting to open up in the program when he lost his father. We didn't see him for a while, checked in, welcomed him back to the program, but he was very quiet and obviously grieving. He shared how nice it was to have something to do daily and loved the skills he was learning, and could feel change happening. He was placed with a local grocery store for work experience, and before the week was over, they offered him a job. I hear he has trained other staff, increased his skills and interactions, and is loved at work. He had a chance to move to another store, but the staff wanted him to stay with them where he was!"*

**ELST Coordinator**







## Kermode Friendship Centre (Terrace)

*"Kermode has helped me with my addictions and mental health. I was struggling with my life and if it wasn't for Kermode I would have never thought that I could have the things I have now. Like a job, a counselor, training, and a stable home. Thank you to the staff who helped me!"*

ELST Client



### Responding to COVID-19

Kermode Friendship Centre modified service delivery by increasing virtual connection with clients, as well as supporting them with wrap-around services focusing on food security, shelter and warm clothing, as those needs intensified due to COVID. In Terrace, an increased number of community members experienced poverty, less access to healthcare, substance misuse, food insecurity, and technology connection barriers.

### Holistic Approach to Service Delivery

The Kermode ELST Coordinator works within a collaborative system in the Friendship Centre that works with members as a whole and, through referrals,

streamlines clients into other internal supporting departments. Through ELST, clients access ticket trainings, driving lessons, esthetics courses, and individual supports such as work gear, transportation subsidies, food gift cards, and childcare assistance. They also participate in cultural components, and have access to educational upgrading through strong partnerships with Coast Mountain College and North Coast Distant Education.

The coordinator notes: "The strength of this program is the ability to offer a full wrap-around support to clients seeking employment and education. The community recognizes this, and has shown more confidence in the process of starting this journey

through a Friendship Centre. The service is a gateway to self-sustainability, this is the last step/goal for many of our clients that are ready to live their lives independently and establish the supportive relationships they need to live a fulfilling life."

### What's Ahead

Going forward, the ELST Coordinator would like to focus on early childhood education training, health care education, business administration, driving instruction, and essential skills learning.

*"I had a client that had the full wrap-around service from Kermode. He was struggling with mental health, substance misuse, housing stability, employment, and food security. From our Outreach Department he transitioned into housing. After his food security and mental health was supported, he then secured a place in supportive housing that allows him to access substance misuse programs and services. He was then recruited as a candidate for our "Ambassador Program" to provide clients space for opportunities to connect with a worker, prepare clients for employment through supervised work experience, engage the homeless population of Terrace in doing productive activity three times per week, and preparing them for sustainable housing status. We introduce clients to life skills, such as cooking, communication, time management, motivation, team work. This client successfully graduated from this program and became an employee of Kermode Friendship Centre."*

ELST Coordinator





## Mission Friendship Centre Society

*"I had a client who took the forklift program and she had never driven before. She was breaking down in tears at the beginning afraid to drive the machine. By the end she was driving around like a pro. Her fear turned into success and happiness. Another client recently expressed to me how successful he felt at his new job, and how he is so glad he was able to change his career path with our assistance."*

**ELST Coordinator**

### Responding to COVID-19

Mission Frienship Centre Society implemented an ELST Coordinator and developed a new program during COVID 19 restrictions, which required all activities to be conducted online soon after its development. Networking to find eligible clients and instructors was especially challenging for a new program and position, but the coordinator persevered successfully through social media platforms. She notes: "I find that everyone's successes are unique, and I find a lot of people aiming for different goals. In my program I was off to a great start holding group workshops. Ever since we have been mandated to work from home my numbers have dropped. I am hoping to return to normal soon!"

### Creating A Welcoming Environment

The ELST program focused on basic trainings and certifications, while providing transportation supports, mental health and wellness assistance, driving lessons, and parenting classes. Soft skills and computer literacy are also in demand. The coordinator observed that: "Positive unconditional regard has been successful in my program. Making everyone feel welcome is the first step to a successful outcome, and having the proper resources for clients has also helped with challenges and barriers."

### What's Ahead

Once restrictions lift, the ELST Coordinator would like to increase ongoing multi-week programming and incorporate more life skills and cultural components.



*First Aid certification course at Mission Friendship Centre Society.*





## Nawican Friendship Centre (Dawson Creek)

*"A client wanted to quit before his last training course, his living situation had changed as did his transportation and phone. He felt he had no other way to carry forward and he was disappointed. We were able to help him with the resources to attend his last training. He had showed us determination throughout his other training and tickets until this situation happened. He kept expressing his gratitude, deeply thanking the centre for all we had provided for him."*

ELST Coordinator

### Responding to COVID-19

Nawican Friendship Centre experienced staff shortages due to COVID exposures, but was able to adapt and have all staff assist with basic services as required. Pick-up food security programs and delivery of meals to isolated Elders and the disabled was a focus.

Staff assisted community members with forms and applications that would otherwise be difficult to complete because of limited Internet, computer literacy, and access to technology. A lack of appropriate spaces for safe indoor activities was a huge barrier to in-person services.

### Adapting Service Delivery

Due to these impacts, the ELST

Coordinator had to delay the much-anticipated WOLF (Woman/Warrior Obtaining Lifelong Foundations) multi-week life skills, wellness and basic certifications training program, and focus on one-on-one client supports. Some clients also accessed addictions counseling, and the in-house Mental Health and Addictions Redpath Treatment program.

The ELST Coordinator noted that a key part of their success in helping clients overcome challenges was due to: "open-minded staff willing to listen and accommodate for learning barriers, or lack of tools. This helped clients gain employment and/or complete training that was needed to increase employment success."

### What's Ahead

Once restrictions lift, the ELST Coordinator would like to provide the WOLF program on an ongoing basis, and add more health and wellness components to it. Computer literacy is a growing need, and she would also like to start a driving program, life skills workshops and other one-on-one courses for those who have challenges to support, learn, and study with each other for increased success. She currently has a waitlist of seven people interested in her driving program and basic security training as soon as an instructor can be procured, and in-person sessions are possible.



Nawican Friendship Centre's Redpath Treatment program room.





## Ooknakane Friendship Centre (Penticton)

*"The ELST program, for the short time it has been offered, has already been a huge asset to the community of Penticton and surrounding areas. It has helped many people better and believe in themselves. As it develops and continues, it will only help more people."*

ELST Coordinator



### Responding to COVID-19

Ooknakane implemented a new ELST position and program during COVID-19. Recruitment and program and service delivery were challenging, but the coordinator managed to connect with people over the phone, and on social media platforms. Friendship Centre staff assisted with benefits applications, provided hampers to community members on a daily basis, and hosted a vaccine clinic.

### Building a Solid Foundation

Life skills services have been a focus, as many clients are reporting isolation and depression due to COVID restrictions. Some successful program components have included Respectful

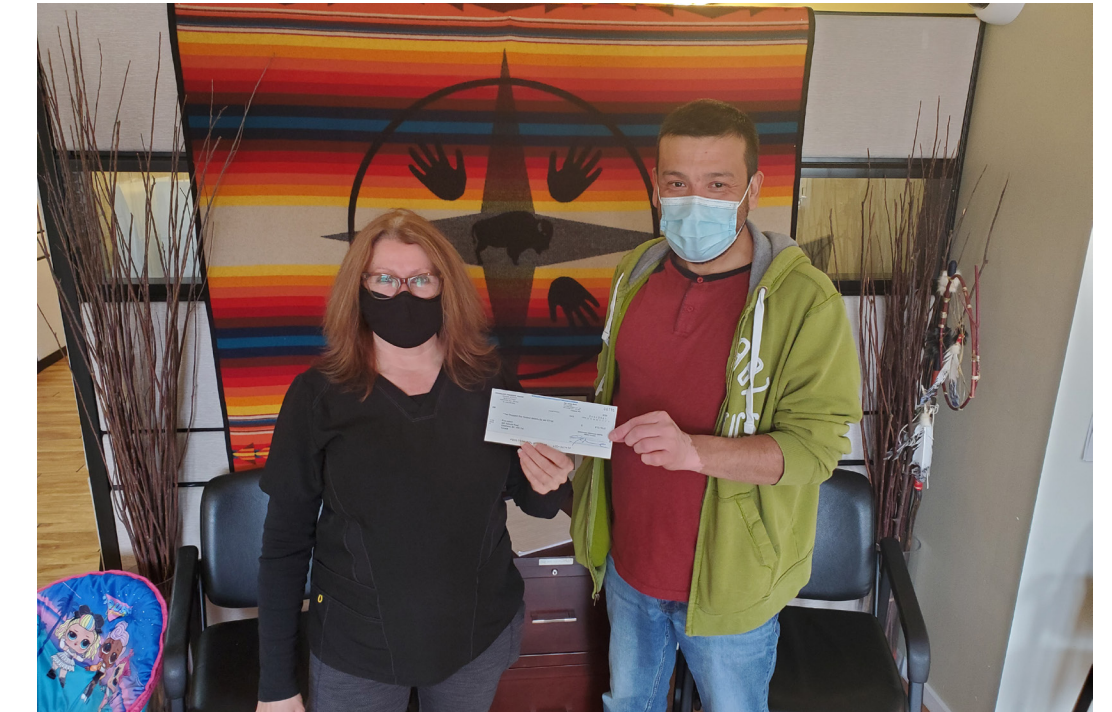
Relationships modules, budgeting, food security, professional clothing supports, and job coaching. Some clients have been referred to the Ooknakane Mental Health and Addictions Worker. Educational upgrading, and career change skills training have also been highlights, with health care assistant and administrative assistant courses being completed successfully. Participants reported increased confidence, a sense of accomplishment, and a determination to succeed.

### What's Ahead

Once restrictions lift, the ELST Coordinator would like to implement more group events, with a focus on computer literacy, financial literacy, and an increase in life skills components.

*"I didn't think I could do it – it had been such a long time since I was in school. But with the Coordinator's help and confidence in me, I did it! I passed the pre-exams with flying colours. Thanks Tanja!"*

ELST Client



*The Ooknakane Friendship Centre ELST Coordinator presents a client with funding to support their education.*





## Prince George Native Friendship Centre

*"It is absolutely amazing that I secured employment after training, and I'm so lucky and grateful. I wouldn't be where I am without the help from everyone at PGNFC and I'm not going to lie, I am a little emotional right now. I have never had so many good things happen for me, it's a little unbelievable and I just wanted to say thank you to everyone involved. Stay safe and I'll be sure to keep in touch."*

ELST Client

### Responding to Community Needs

Over the past year, the Prince George Native Friendship Centre met increased needs for support completing forms and applications for EI, Band, CRA, and income assistance. Computer literacy issues, and not having access to the Internet or a computer, became endemic, as all jobs and most supports are now applied for online.

During COVID, the ELST Coordinator worked to fill a gap in programming available to community members who were unable to continue work in their current job or field and required new training. Despite restrictions and limitations, participants were able to access

trainings and certifications with support through the Friendship Centre. ELST services also included life skills components, including budgeting, food security, effective communication, anger management, thinking and learning styles, and practicing patience. The in-house Learning Circle literacy program in partnership with the College of New Caledonia was also available to participants, and an online workshop with Elder cultural crafts was offered.

### Providing Follow-up Supports

The ELST Coordinator notes: "We change lives. We meet clients where they are at. We provide follow-up supports. Our successful clients provide economic

resources back to the community when they are successful in employment. In our community, there is a drop in abuse, alcohol and addiction. A drop in domestic violence and homelessness. It lifts people up, and encourages others in the community and Indigenous community to do the same."

### What's Ahead

When possible, the ELST Coordinator would like to offer more computer literacy training, in-person networking with employers, resume and interview planning workshops, volunteer opportunities, and a specific program for older clients to gain new employment as difficulty increases in employment situations with high physical demand.



*Prince George Native Friendship Centre ELST program participants with their certifications.*



## Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre (Port Hardy)



**The Wúqvanúgvaa -Belief In Oneself Program currently has 27 people on the waitlist.**

### Overcoming Challenges Due to COVID-19

Implementing the new Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre ELST Program was challenging, as the centre was not able to provide any in-person services due to space and safety restrictions. The centre focused on food hampers and food security supports and assisted with application processes.

### Identifying Barriers to Employment

The ELST Coordinator worked hard to develop a clientele through coworkers, in-house referrals, and social media platforms. There was a focus on trainings and certifications, as well as supports to successfully complete educational upgrades and First

Aid, Carpentry Level 1, and Health Care Assistant courses. She noted that racism, stigma and a lack of confidence were significant barriers in the community.

### Building Community Partnerships

The coordinator is networking and building partnerships with employers and educational institutions in order to increase options for clientele over time. She is currently working with North Island College to bring Marine Essential Skills to the North Island. While interacting with clients and gauging community need, she developed a multi-week cohort program which began delivery in April 2021, with a full cohort of 12 participants.

The program is called Wúqvanúgvaa – Belief In Oneself, Healing Through Trauma Barriers, with the online sessions delivered on loaned tablets, led by an Indigenous facilitator and local Elder. It is designed to help identify and address employment barriers associated with trauma, and offer tools to work through them to begin a healing journey. Course content includes job readiness skills, time management, and employable skills certifications such as First Aid Level 1, WHMIS, and Food Handlers Certificates.

The Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre ELST program has grown in a very short time from recruitment challenges to a current waitlist of 27 people for the Wúqvanúgvaa -Belief In Oneself program.

*“One client in my program was affected by a house fire over a year ago, and has been struggling to get back on his feet ever since. This client was unable to find a steady home for himself, his partner and 2-year old toddler. He shared with me his personal story of childhood trauma, and the emotions these have caused him in his young adult life. He has a young family and is trying to find a healthier path for himself. He was personally saving up funds to gain his Occupational First Aid Level 3 (OFA-030). He saw an advertisement on Facebook that the ELST program was sponsoring a limited number of clients to attend this course, and after submitting a short questionnaire was chosen to attend. He successfully completed this course with an average of 80%! Following his completion, he was offered two jobs and accessed support through the ELST program for required work equipment. He and his partner have expressed their deep gratitude for this program, and shared it amongst their friends through social media.”*

**ELST Coordinator**





## Tansi Friendship Centre (Chetwynd)

*“The strengths of this program are: I have seen a lot of new clients obtain the required certifications to gain employment in our community. By word of mouth alone, I have seen an increase in the number of clients come in stating that they heard through a family member or friend that they can obtain training through the Friendship Centre.”*

ELST Coordinator

### Responding to COVID-19

Tansi Friendship Centre has been delivering appointment-only services during COVID, which has made recruitment and program delivery a challenge, as many people do not have Internet and/or computer access. There has been a steady increase in community members accessing the Tansi weekly food bank and community take-out lunches, and receiving assistance with completing forms and applications.

### Addressing Community Needs

As resource and industry jobs are the main employment opportunities in Chetwynd, there is high demand for safety, security and First Aid

training. Clients have faced an increase in accommodation and transportation barriers required to access employment credentials elsewhere. The ELST program offers training opportunities, provides support to overcome barriers, and offers in-house access to life skills, cultural activities, and wellness programming.

The ELST Coordinator notes: “This training program is desperately needed in the community of Chetwynd. A lot of people do not have the funds to lay out for the safety training they require, and no other access to life skills training. If the course is taking place out of town, many community members do not have the transportation funds to travel out of town.

The ELST program allows me to break down those barriers to employment and training so they can achieve their end goal- to secure employment, support their families, and pay their rent and bills.”

### What’s Ahead

Going forward, the ELST Coordinator would like to host more in-person group workshops, coordinate job fairs, increase financial literacy and cultural components, implement driver training, and offer a job readiness boot camp.



*“Your boy is a graduated Emergency Medical Responder! One step closer to my dream career. I’d like to personally thank the ELST Coordinator and everyone at the Tansi Friendship Society for their support.”*

ELST Client



## Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre

*“My biggest challenge was staying sober and attending class, but this program has brought me closer to my culture. It benefited me by showing me what's possible when I put my mind to it.”*

ELST Client



### Holistic Service Delivery

The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre implemented a new ELST Coordinator and multi-week cohort program during COVID restrictions. The centres programs and services are delivered by appointment, with a focus on food security and housing.

The nine-week ELST program quickly adapted to remote delivery. The program incorporates wellness presentations from First Nations Health Authority, cultural components interwoven with life skills, and certifications to become a Building Services Worker. There is a focus on providing support for clients who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, with many internal referrals to in-house

services and supports, including one-on-one employment services with the Aboriginal Community Career Services Society (ACCESS), an employment agency in Vancouver.

### Addressing Homelessness

The ELST Coordinator notes: “The strength of this program is that it focuses on providing support for clients who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness... A number of participants are in supported housing (some of whom were homeless in the past). They are all motivated to find jobs that they enjoy. Another participant has been accepted into an entrepreneurship program, and is very motivated to start his own business and open a cleaning company. This program impacts

the urban community as it offers support to those who have been unemployed for a long time and are either homeless or have been homeless in the past. It has helped them to gain the training and certificates necessary to help them to start a routine life, and prepare for full-time employment.”

### What’s Ahead

Some participants from the first cohort have started training to upgrade their skillset and enrolled in post-secondary education at Native Education College. As COVID restrictions lift, ELST will be able to offer this programming to larger cohorts, with the benefits of in-person sessions.

*“As a result of being in the ELST Program, one participant now has financial stability. He also now has a positive outlook on his life, as he has a good, well-paying career to look ahead to in his future. Another participant gained confidence and a sense of accomplishment through the program. She told me personally and also stated at their graduation how much this program helped her gain self-confidence and self-respect. In the program survey/ evaluation, she stated: “I learnt that I am capable, worth it and that I am a very strong, powerful, young Indigenous woman, which I found has been more rewarding with my newly- gained certificates.”*

ELST Coordinator





## Victoria Native Friendship Centre

*"A 35-year old man recently thanked us for getting him a job, which was a domino effect for them to get their children back, this job gave them the ability to pay for their rental unit and the wife came out to personally thank me, it was very moving."*

ELST Coordinator

### Responding to COVID-19

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre was able to implement a new ELST Coordinator and program during COVID, with a focus on mid-career clients who require upskilling, re-training, and are required to change occupations due to COVID and other factors. The centre has been open for appointment-only services, with a focus on food security and form assists, as well as hosting an on-going vaccine clinic.

### Growing Demand for Training Opportunities

The ELST Coordinator has noted a growing demand for computer literacy training, Office Suite skills, drivers licensing, and beauty

school training. Daycares in the area are at full capacity, which has been a huge challenge for clients. The programming is aimed at older clientele changing careers mid-stream, and connecting qualified Indigenous professionals with the Indigenous organizations seeking them.

### What's Ahead

As COVID restrictions lift, the ELST program at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre will begin to realize further potential. The ELST Coordinator suspects an increase in clients who have been forced to change occupations throughout COVID. The ELST Coordinator would like to continue the development of strong partnerships with local nations and employers.

Some new focuses that have arisen are a very strong need for driving training, which can be high-barriered for many people, as well as preparing for growth in the film industry in Victoria, as production and film schools open up.





## Wachiay Friendship Centre (Courtenay)



### Commercial Screenprinting Program

The Wachiay Friendship Centre ran their highly successful Intro to Commercial Screenprinting program through ELST funding. The program delivers design skills, inexpensive production start-up, printing skills, and a foundational understanding of business and entrepreneurship.



### Adapting to COVID-19

After quickly adapting to complete online and video instruction, all materials and supplies were sent to students. This increased the accessibility of the program, especially for individuals living in remote or rural areas, and reduced potential financial and transportation barriers.

The coordinator explains that: “With the ability to connect art to enterprise, the process of screenprinting has a greater purpose than just making cool t-shirts. Through screenprinting, artists, makers, and entrepreneurs are able to create capacity and self-sufficiency that bolsters local economies and supports healthy communities. It is through this intention that the Screenprinting for Entrepreneurs grows from being of benefit to just the students and instead becomes a catalyst for growth and opportunity within a community. One of the greatest success stories to me has been the community growth among our students. During such an isolating and challenging year, it has been a joy to watch students, previously

strangers to one another, become friends, allies, and support systems. The students were encouraging to one another and helped foster a space that enabled their confidence to grow, even as they had setbacks and made mistakes. There is something special about learning together, and for this group, it was a bright light in the murk of the pandemic.”

### What’s Ahead

When COVID restrictions lift, there will be opportunity for in-person training hosted at Wachiay Studio to include greater attention to the use of commercial screenprinting equipment. Additionally, there is interest in an advanced training program for students to refine their skills, which would be best served by in-person learning.

*“Samantha and Van came to us already with the goal of starting a clothing business. Though their ambition was great, neither had ever even held a squeegee before. In fact, on their very first print, they put their screen in upside down and were left with a mess. By week 4 their confidence had grown and they were roaring to get started on their business! By week 6, they had a business name registered, a logo designed, and clothing designs ready to go. Before the program was complete, Sam and Van had printed items to sell, arranged a photoshoot, implemented their social media and marketing strategies, and successfully launched their business! Their enthusiasm and commitment was inspiring to watch, not just for other students but for the instructors as well. Check them out @freecoastcompany on Instagram!”*

ELST Coordinator



# What's Ahead

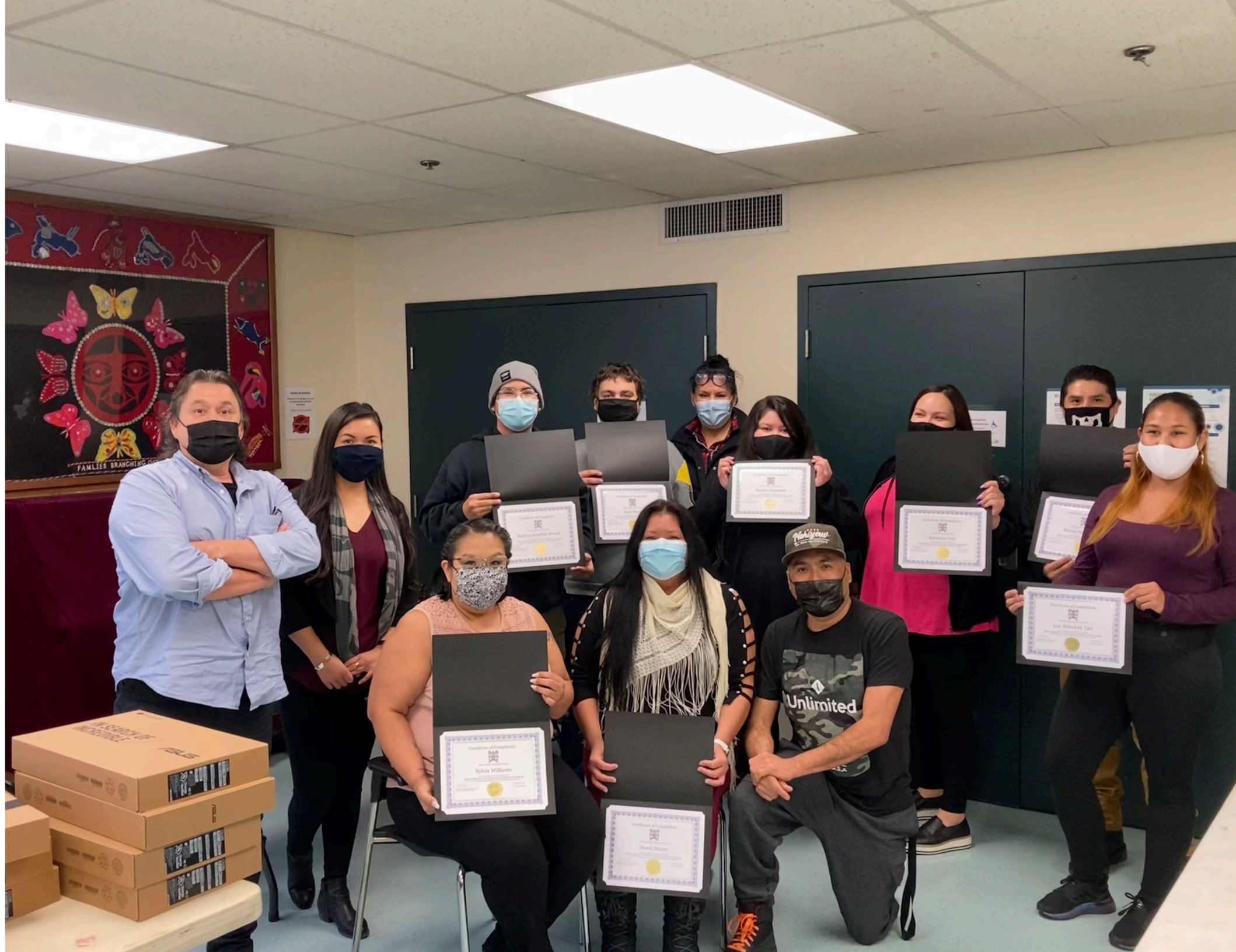
BC Friendship Centre and ELST Coordinators rose to the challenges presented by changing COVID-19 restrictions and online service delivery and were successful in launching new Employment, Life Skills, and Training Programs.

Due to the increased demand for services provided by ELST, some programs currently have waitlists, and others are just beginning to reach their full potential as they adapt to changing community needs, with a new focus on computer literacy and access to technology, in response to the priorities identified by clients and employers. We are excited to see what the ELST programs can accomplish in a broader way once restrictions lift and in-person services can grow.

Stability and employee retention is a huge factor in the success of these programs, as it takes time to gain experience, adjust programming, build community and employer networks, and gain client trust. Long-term funding for ELST programs would be an immense asset going forward.

We would like to express our gratitude to the incredible staff of the BC Friendship Centres for their amazing work in this very difficult year, as they go above and beyond to create so many successes.

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training for their continued funding support and assistance as we support Indigenous peoples living in urban areas and away from home to achieve their vision of health, wellness and prosperity.



## **Employment, Life Skills, & Training BC Friendship Centres**

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