



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

August 27, 2021

## Annual Gathering Our Voices: Indigenous Youth Leadership Training Event Cancelled Until Further Notice

After careful consideration, we are saddened to announce that the Gathering Our Voices: Indigenous Youth Leadership Training event will not return in 2022.

This decision was not made lightly—we know the connections made at Gathering Our Voices are invaluable, and we have greatly missed the passion, knowledge and joy shared by the Indigenous youth in attendance each year. We also know that protecting our communities is of the utmost importance and right now the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus is too great.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been in contact with the Provincial Health Office, public health leaders, and medical experts to maintain our understanding of how best to protect our communities. Factors influencing our decision to delay the return of Gathering Our Voices include the availability and accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccine for Indigenous youth, the low vaccine uptake among Indigenous people living in BC, the uncertainty of COVID-19 variants, and the resurgence of COVID-19 in parts of the province.

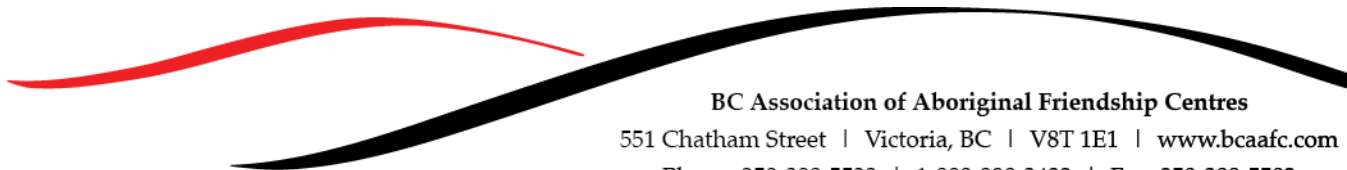
We hope that we can safely host Gathering Our Voices in 2023. The return of the event will be a priority following emerging and heightened challenges that have unfolded during the global pandemic. We raise our hands in deep respect and appreciation for the Indigenous youth who have made sacrifices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect their communities.

The 25 Friendship Centres across the province have expressed concern for the health and wellness of Indigenous youth who are navigating the climbing impacts of global events such as COVID-19 and the climate crisis. Our team at the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, in collaboration with the councils and member centres, are advocating for increased supports for programs and services upholding the health and wellness of Indigenous youth.

We know the most effective leadership and wellness resources for Indigenous youth are Indigenous led. Thank you to our partners and funders who recognize this and share our vision. Together, we look forward to strengthening the tools and resources available to Indigenous youth leaders and fostering new ways of connection and collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For crisis lines and support resources, please visit: <http://bcaafc.com/health/>

For inquiries, please contact: [govcoordinator@bcaafc.com](mailto:govcoordinator@bcaafc.com)



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