BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Annual Report



We acknowledge with respect and gratitude the communities who inform our work and allow us to live on their traditional and unceded territories.

The BCAAFC resides on the traditional territory of the Lkwungen-speaking peoples and the WSÁNEĆ peoples, the traditional keepers of this land who remain here as the original and rightful stewards.

Each Friendship Centre is powered by multigenerational relationships, a deep understanding of the communities they are a part of, and a shared commitment to providing culturally-relevant services to Indigenous peoples.

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

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From our President

Thank you to the BCAAFC Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, Elders, youth, and partners. Your collective work ensures our Friendship Centres are informed, supported, and able to care for and serve their communities.

The World Health Organization and the Province have declared the COVID pandemic over. But the virus is still in circulation, hundreds of people are still in the hospital in B.C., and the effects of the multiyear public health crisis are still being felt by Indigenous people and communities.

Thankfully, ongoing COVID response funding has helped

Friendship Centres adapt to the evolving needs of their communities. Over the past year, Friendship Centres created new staffing positions to meet the increasing services demand and expanded food security initiatives.

Because federal on-reserve COVID funding prevents First Nations from serving their members living off-reserve, Friendship Centres are being noticed and needed more than ever before. I want to recognize how the leadership and staff of each Friendship Centre are leaning in to help our people.

You should all be proud of that commitment and dedication to

your people. And you should know that the increased work you are doing and services you are providing are appreciated and recognized—not only by our own people but by our funders too.

We should also be proud of the fact that we put on our first Gathering Our Voices event in three years after having to cancel the conference due to COVID!

This year's event did not come without some unexpected issues there was a terrible racist incident at the hotel we had booked, which required us to switch locations a month before the event. But the BCAAFC team and our amazing

volunteers made it happen. And it was the first time the youth could gather together in three long years and you could tell how much it

meant to them.

During the event, we also received a five-year provincial funding commitment for Gathering Our Voices totalling \$10 million. The moment at the end of the opening night ceremonies when the minister announced the five years of funding was beautiful and epic.

In 2022, we also received \$8.4M to advance reconciliation in the B.C. community social services sector. The funding is currently supporting the development of a reconciliation framework and action plan overseen by the BCAAFC for the next five years. This is an Indigenous-led, multifaceted approach, fully supported by our social services sector partners, academic allies, and our Indigenous colleagues.

We are building capacity through the Indigenous Master's Degree in Business Administration and Indigenous Reconciliation with the University of Victoria. We are expanding existing tools for anonymously reporting experiences of racism in the social services sector (like the SafeSpace web application). And we are developing a train-the-trainermodel for delivering anti-racism tools, assessments, and Indigenous cultural safety training. This is exciting and important work.

In closing, I want to thank all the Elders who share their wisdom and strength with us and the Indigenous youth who are using their voices and standing up for each other. You are our future and it is bright.

And I want to thank everyone who continues to show up and support the Friendship Centre Movement.

Elijah Mack President

From our Executive Director

Last year, we marked the 50th anniversary of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres. As we look forward to the next 50 years, I want to thank and congratulate everyone who has contributed to the Friendship Centre Movement.

You have helped improve the wellbeing and advance the rights of Indigenous peoples throughout British Columbia in so many ways.

The past 12 months have been both amazing and challenging.

While we experienced a very distressing incident of racism during a membership meeting, our

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staff, supported by Elders, managed the situation with dignity, courage, wisdom, and love.

Going public with the situation resulted in a number of organizations announcing their support and allyship with us and with all Indigenous people. They pulled their own conferences from the hotel and stood beside us until they were assured the hotel had addressed the matter to our satisfaction. And importantly, the First Nations leadership organizations quickly stood beside us in solidarity.

After another member meeting, where many members voiced

frustration about the MCFD RFP process excluding two Friendship Centres, we received \$1 million to put toward cultural safety training for caregivers. This money will help us begin improving the dire state of foster caregiving for Indigenous youth in this province.

I was also very pleased to both announce and attend the launch of our custom-built MBA in Indigenous reconciliation this year. This program, delivered at the University of Victoria, has been a dream of ours for a long time. It will build capacity, increase cultural safety, and support succession planning in the community social services sector—supporting safer access to social services for Indigenous people across B.C. And 13 of the first 27 students are associated with Friendship Centres!

I am also very proud of the work BCAAFC is doing to develop capacity in the anti-violence sector. In particular, our partnership with Battered Women Support Services to provide Indigenous-specific training for front-line workers and the Path Forward Anti-Violence Community Fund which is helping to expand safety planning capacity.

All of this important work is fueled by the collective action of our staff, members, volunteers, and partners. I hold my hands up in respect to the incredible BCAAFC team who continue to show up for each other, for our members, and for our communities despite the crises and uncertainty we are all continuing to live through.

I thank and acknowledge our Board of Directors who continue to be thought leaders, guides, and incredible representatives of the BCAAFC name and legacy. The increasing levels of funding we are obtaining are a result of our reputation and our strong, principled, and ethical leadership.

Thank you to every Friendship Centre that has worked tirelessly to support your communities through the crises we are continuing to face. Your dedication, your guidance, and your thoughtful and principled approach to your work are invaluable.

Thank you to all the urban First Nation, Métis and Inuit folks in every Friendship Centre community who support us and support each other in this work.

We are here for you and we are here because of you.

Leslie Varley Executive Director

Friendship Centres

There are 25 Friendship Centres across B.C. Together they represent over 1,200 employees, 600 partnerships, and 1,000,000 client interactions each year. The BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres is the umbrella organization representing and supporting the 25 Friendship Centres in B.C.

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 (Port Hardy) Tansi Friendship Centre Society (Nanaimo) Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society Victoria Native Friendship Centre

The Movement

The Friendship Centre Movement is made up of over 100 Friendship Centres from across Canada.

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0 0 Friendship Centres provide culturally relevant programs and services for Indigenous people living in urban communities. Collectively, they are the most significant off-reserve Indigenous service delivery infrastructure.

Today, Friendship Centres provide wraparound programs and services in every area you could think of. To many, they are a safe space, a second home, and a place of learning.

The history of the Friendship Centre Movement explains the gift Friendship Centres have for integrating knowledge networks from the past and present to guide and sustain progress.

Timeline

The Friendship Centre Movement in B.C. has been benefiting the health and wellness of Indigenous people for over 60 years.

When listening to stories from trailblazers, founders, and knowledge keepers within the movement, it is evident that Friendship Centres have been leaders and change-makers. While Friendship Centres have evolved over time, they have retained the core values that shaped their beginnings.

This is a movement that started with a single referral centre all the way back in 1954.

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In **1954**, the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club was formed to provide support to Indigenous students in Vancouver. By **1970**, it was common for government service agencies to refer Indigenous clients to their local Friendship Centre.

1970

1972

1975

In **1963**, the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club changed its title to the Vancouver Indian Centre Society, recognized as a place for all Indigenous people transitioning into Vancouver.

1954

In **1972**, the Friendship Centres that had been established throughout B.C. formed a provincial body, the Pacific Association of Communications in Indian Friendship Centres (PACIFIC), to help the centres share information with one another.

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1963

In **1975**, the B.C. Government began providing funding to PACIFIC to distribute to the Friendship Centres. In **1983** the federal government created the Native Friendship Centre Program (NFCP).

By **2002**, a total of 25 Friendship Centres are members of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.



By the early 80s, BC Friendship Centres recognized the need for a provincial body to liaison with the B.C. and Federal Governments. In **1982**, they reinvented PACIFIC into the BC Association of Indian Friendship Centres to represent the then 20 Friendship Centres in British Columbia. In **1988**, the NFCP became the Aboriginal Friendship Centres Program (AFCP), which secured the status of permanent funding from the federal government.

In **1996**, the management of AFCP moved to the National Association of Friendship Centres.

In **2011**, the BCAAFC created the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP). A protocol agreement was signed with the B.C. Government in 2014.

In **2022**, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres celebrated its 50th anniversary!

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Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council

The Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council (PAYC) is made up of youth ages 14 to 24 who are involved with Friendship Centres across B.C.

PAYC represents youth voices at a provincial level and implements province-wide initiatives to benefit Indigenous youth.

Together, PAYC members create and provide a network of communication, connecting youth across the country to the Friendship Centre Movement.

PAYC Social Media

With the support of the BCAAFC communications team, the PAYC Special Projects Representative created social media accounts to establish an online presence for PAYC and to help reach Indigenous youth across B.C.

This helped to promote the 2023 Gathering Our Voices event and, as this online presence grows, it will also increase awareness of the PAYC, aid in the recruitment of PAYC members, and help inform Indigenous youth about the Friendship Centre Movement.

Gathering Our Voices

Part of PAYC's role is to co-host the annual Gathering Our Voices (GOV) Indigenous Youth Leadership Training Event. For the 2023 event, PAYC served on the GOV steering committee, attending bi-weekly planning calls and making decisions on presenters, workshops, and cultural pieces.

During the GOV event, PAYC honoured the host Friendship Centres with gifts, led the acknowledgment for MMIWG2s, and supported critical logistics.



Community Connections

Over the past year, PAYC collected and organized contacts of partners. This registry of community connections aided the launch of the PAYC social media accounts and will enhance PAYC recruitment and relationshipbuilding.

New Terms of Reference

In early 2023, PAYC worked with a facilitator to develop new Terms of Reference. They explored increasing the age range for PAYC executive members, extending executive terms, succession planning, and the creation of a PAYC Alumni group.





What's Ahead

As a result of the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council's efforts in the areas of communications, networking, promoting, and recruitment at Gathering Our Voices, many more youth have become aware of the PAYC and have expressed interest in joining the council. This brings the youth council closer to its goal of having representation from all BC Friendship Centres.

The departure of the current PAYC leadership will be alleviated and supported by the creation of a PAYC alumni group and the expansion of the PAYC age criteria. Passing leadership skills from one generation of PAYC members to the next will aid future members in all their endeavours.



Youth on the Council



Council Meetings and Events

Connect with PAYC

TikTok: @FriendshipCentreYouth Instagram: @FriendshipCentreYouth Facebook: @FriendshipCentreYouth

Elders Council

The Elders Council is comprised of Elders from each region of the province, who are nominated by their local Friendship Centre.

Elders are the keepers of culture, traditions, and sacred knowledge; their wisdom and teachings are an integral part of our community and are valued and greatly appreciated.

The Elders Council works closely with the BCAAFC Board of Directors and with the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council, helping to shape the goals and priorities of the Friendship Centre Movement.

Work with the PAYC

The Elders Council worked closely with the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council in co-hosting the Elders & Youth Gathering in May 2022. This event fostered wisdomsharing and community-building and re-established important connections between Elders and Youth across all BC Friendship Centres.

This year, Marge White stepped into the role of resident Elder for the PAYC and has attended both inperson and virtual meetings. This continued involvement has been paramount in helping the youth establish a strong foundation as a new council.

In-Person Gatherings

With in-person gatherings resuming this year, the Elder's Council was busy attending many events, including the BCAAFC Annual General Meeting (AGM) in July and Membership Meetings in November and February.

These were opportunities for the Elder's Council to safely gather once again and hold council meetings while also contributing teachings and guidance to the BCAAFC and its membership.

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Elders Safety

The Elders Safety workshop held at the BCAAFC AGM was a huge success—the room was packed with people spilling out into the hallway! The topic of Elder safety garnered much interest and the council would like to support more learning opportunities around this theme.

Island Elders Gathering

In February, Marge White, Wally Samuel, and our dear Elders Coordinator Charlie George attended the Island Elders Luncheon in Campbell River, where Elders from across Vancouver Island gathered to share songs, dance, food, and good company. August 2023 will mark the return of the Elders Gathering hosted by the BC Elders Communication Society after a multi-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elders from across B.C. will gather in Vancouver for the 47th annual event, which will be an opportunity to exchange memories and knowledge, create new friendships and nurture old ones, and learn about other unique First Nations, shared struggles, and common ground.



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Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the widespread disruption of services and ongoing economic hardship for Friendship Centres and our communities. The ongoing impacts of the pandemic have required Friendship Centres to create new programs and services to address the challenges placed upon families alleviating food insecurity, providing mental health supports, addressing housing and homelessness, expanding emergency supports, and improving technology infrastructure and capacity.

National Funding

The National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (NAFC), in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), completed its fifth round of COVID-19 funding this year. This funding was made available so Friendship Centres and their communities could adapt to the ever-evolving challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing public health crisis.

The objectives of this funding stream were to (1) aid the implementation of the most effective health and safety practices, thus minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, (2) aid in the continuity of programs and services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic while health and safety protocols are implemented, (3) provide community support to address new challenges that may arise from COVID-19, and (4) ensure the continuation of safe delivery of programs and services to urban Indigenous communities.

Friendship Centres have utilized this funding to increase their capacity and impact by hiring additional staff, completing renovations and facility updates, and investing in equipment and technology to support the significant increase in service demand over the past few years.

Provincial Funding

The provincial COVID-19 response funding allowed many Friendship Centres to expand or add staffing positions to support new and expanded programs and services. This allowed Friendship Centres to increase their reach at a crucial time and provide critical support to those in need.

The provincial COVID-19 response funding has been a vital resource for Friendship Centres that are supporting their communities through the chaos and difficulty of the pandemic. It has also demonstrated the importance of continuous funding when it comes to community supports.

Strong community relationships have allowed Friendship Centres to maximize the impact of this funding, but many have also highlighted the need for more





New emergency shelter beds created by the Nawican Friendship Centre



Meals distributed by the Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre

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multi-year program funding in order to reduce staff burnout, maintain service delivery, and meet the needs of communities.

Food Security

An important way that Friendship Centres are supporting their communities is through food security initiatives such as weekly meal programs, food banks, and the distribution of food hampers.

Gathering around food has always been very important. Many Friendship Centres have used food security initiatives to facilitate connection within the community while also providing opportunities for additional outreach, mental health interventions, and referrals to other services that Friendship Centres offer. The Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert have used the provincial COVID-19 funding to offer "Chili Day," where they give out fry-bread, chili, warm mitts, and hats to those who attend.

After observing the small gatherings created by their meal delivery van, the Prince George Friendship Centre recognized an opportunity to add a mental health support worker to their meal delivery program to provide mobile outreach and support.

What's Next

Friendship Centres are extremely grateful for the flexible nature of this funding, which has allowed them to support the unique needs of each community. This has had a significant impact on the daily lives of urban Indigenous people. The NAFC and ISC have announced that they will be distributing a sixth round of ICSF COVID funding for 2023-2024.

However, The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many long-standing issues such as food insecurity, homelessness, mental health, addiction, and domestic violence. Many of these issues will affect Indigenous peoples and communities long after the COVID funding has been exhausted. There is a need for increased and ongoing funding supports to address these serious and compounding issues.

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THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES: FUNDING IMPACT

- Community Holiday Dinner with an Elder as Santa for the Children
- Gas Cards to attend Friendship Centre Programs
- Birthday Lunches and Bingo Games for Elders
- A New Food Service Room and Delivery Ramp
- Tablets and Training Sessions for Elders and Families
- Personal Hygiene Kits for Vulnerable Populations
- Purchase of a Van to Deliver Warm Meals and Gift Cards

WRAP-AROUND COMMUNITY CARE

In Port Alberni, when an Elder ended up in the hospital, support staff funded by provincial COVID money provided food hampers and support while the Elder was receiving care. When the Elder returned home, the Friendship Centre's Family and Health Services team helped secure mobility resources and new housing. As a result, the Elder regained their independence and was able to continue accessing food resources at the Friendship Centre every day and resumed their carving practice.

Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP)

Organizational Capacity

The goal of the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) Organizational Capacity funding is to provide core funds to help Friendship Centres maintain a stable financial base from which to deliver culturally appropriate programs and supports, case management, and referral services that support urban Indigenous peoples and communities.

This Organizational Capacity (OC) funding covers day-to-day operating costs, including salaries and benefits of key positions and overhead such as rent, utilities, and office supplies.

Thanks to this funding, Friendship Centres have more time, capacity, and opportunities to create and maintain partnerships in their communities and expand and enhance the services and supports they provide to urban Indigenous people.

The BCAAFC disburses OC funding to Friendship Centres on a quarterly basis. For 2022-2023, this allocation included a base amount of \$120,000, plus an additional allocation calculated using a points-based model that considers indicators such as the size and reach of a Friendship Centre, number of clients served, and number of programs and/or services offered.

Thanks to the NAFC and ISC, the UPIP funding contract has been extended through March 2025 and Friendship Centres will see increased OC funding at both the PTA and Friendship Centre levels over the next two fiscal years.

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Scope and Scale

Friendship Centres continue to report challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified individuals due to the increasing cost of living and the higher salaries offered by competing agencies. Many are also experiencing an increasing need for human resources staff and initiatives; however, OC funding does not currently provide money for HR.

In addition to capacity limitations, many Friendship Centres occupy spaces that are in need of repairs that are not adequately covered through the OC core funding. Longer-term infrastructure funding for repairs and renovations would be a way to significantly improve this funding stream.

Success Stories

The Port Alberni Friendship Centre has taken the lead in supporting the homeless folks in their community and is building a tiny home village.

Carol Camille, Executive Director of the Lillooet Friendship Centre Society, was honoured with the BC Achievement Community Award.

The Nawican Friendship Centre gift store is a social enterprise that continues to help fund programs and services while also supporting Indigenous artists.



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Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples

Programs & Services

The Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) Programs & Services funding supports new and ongoing efforts that serve urban Indigenous peoples and address locally-identified issues. Initiatives are supported in the following areas: women, vulnerable populations, youth, transition services, outreach programs, and community wellness.

With COVID restrictions lifted, Friendship Centres were able to return to providing in-person services and group programming.

Despite funding limitations, Friendship Centres found new and creative ways to meet the increasing needs of their communities around issues like food security, housing, and mental health. Friendship Centres across B.C. continue to build and grow relationships with community partners and remain a vital support and service provider to urban Indigenous people.

Many Friendship Centres have identified a growing need for wraparound services and supports. However, restricted funding and a lack of capacity are significant barriers. Flexible and long-term funding would allow Friendship Centres to deliver programs and services that meet the increasingly complex needs of their communities without interruptions or delays.

Success Stories

The Culture is Alive program at the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre

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Society has been able to team up with the centre's Learning Hub program to ensure participants have access to cultural workshops such as drum making, war canoe paddling, and traditional medicine making. Families say the youth are thoroughly enjoying these activities and have brought their learnings back to their siblings and other family members.

In Prince Rupert, newcomers often stay at the Pioneer Hotel, one of the social enterprises run by the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert. From there, people can be referred to Friendship House daycare and programs (like employment support) and are welcomed into the community.

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WRAP-AROUND COMMUNITY CARE

"If it wasn't for meeting your staff and the referrals to training at the Friendship House and being referred to your daycare and preschool, I would not have been able to get my driver's license and certificates for my new job and a new apartment. You are a lifesaver. We attended your Christmas dinner and my children so appreciated the gifts you gave them. We also attend the Friendship House community events. We love this place."

- Newcomer from Nigeria and her two children, now living in Prince Rupert

PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

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The Nawican Friendship Centre's weekly Elder luncheon provides an ongoing opportunity for Elders to see their friends, tell stories, and discuss their histories, cultures, and beliefs. The Friendship Centre provides transportation to and from the assisted living home and recently had two Elders join the luncheons that hadn't been outside the facility for years!

The space to socialize, enjoy a hot meal, and experience love and attention is improving the wellbeing of many Elders, some of whom aren't able to participate in other Friendship Centre activities.

Qushin'tul Youth Services at the Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of

Friendship) Society has been thriving for the past few years with both new and returning youth. After attending lunch breaks at their local school district to drum and sing and make connections with youth in the community, their drop-in program went from 8-10 youth per day to 40-50 youth.

The program also helps youth seek employment within the Cowichan Valley. The youth are ever so grateful for the help they have received. This year, Qushin'tul Youth Services helped 172 youth!

The employment centre at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society supports many clients, the majority of whom otherwise experience disadvantages due to ageism, underemployment, addiction, or disability. Thanks to community partnerships with organizations like Northern BC Guard, Lifesavers, Smokehouse Kitchen Program, and ERC Training, the Friendship Centre can create meaningful training and career opportunities that help many people overcome barriers and break cycles of under and unemployment.

By working with other supports available through the Friendship Centre, they can provide wraparound services that help address related issues like literacy, mental illness, and substance use.

Provincial Capacity

Provincial Capacity (ProCap) funding contributes to the core funding that Friendship Centres rely on to deliver their programs and services.

ProCap funding can be used to expand and improve the infrastructure of Friendship Centres through Information Technology (IT) upgrades, staff training and development, and minor capital repairs or renovations.

Friendship Centres receive a base funding allocation of \$61,600 as well as an additional allocation that is calculated using a points-based model.

Over the past year, the majority of Friendship Centres used their ProCap funding to cover wages and benefits for positions such as program directors, assistant executive directors, and youth workers.

Friendship Centres also devoted ProCap funds to a range of important upgrades and repairs such as improving their spaces, facilities, and processes.

These projects included replacing old flooring, reconfiguring office and program areas to maximize usable space, upgrading heating and ventilation systems, purchasing new kitchen appliances to better meet program needs, and updating IT equipment and software.

However, ProCap funding remains year-to-year, often with delayed confirmation and roll-out. Multi-year funding would allow Friendship Centres to make more significant and more strategic training, development, and infrastructure investments.

Success Stories

Thanks to ProCap funding, the Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society was able to purchase a stand-up freezer for their kitchen. This was an important step in updating their equipment and has improved their food security

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efforts by greatly increasing the freezer capacity available for community meal preparation.

The Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society used ProCap funding to complete muchneeded renovations and upgrades to their main building, The Gathering Place. These included the installation of a wheelchair ramp and upgrades to their Emergency Dental Outreach Clinic.

Annual ProCap funding has enabled the Wachiay Friendship Centre Society to invest in establishing an effective management team. Working with the Executive Director, the management team has developed new policies to guide and support staff, improved the office environment, and created a positive, engaged workplace.

For several years, the Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (FRAFCA) has worked with the Home Depot Canada Foundation, which has a mission to end youth homelessness.

This year, FRAFCA took that relationship to the next step and became an official Community Partner. They were selected by various different Home Depot locations to be featured in-store and collect donations that go directly to the Friendship Centre.

Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association 10095 Whalley Blvd, Surrey Bl (604) 595-1170 receptions frafea.org www.frafea.org



First Citizens Fund: Friendship Centre Program

The First Citizens Fund—Friendship Centre Program (FCF-FCP) provides funding that supports the delivery of social, recreational, and cultural programming to urban Indigenous peoples. These funds support the administrative costs associated with the development, implementation, and delivery of programming as well as program-related materials and supplies.

This year, the First Citizens Fund— Friendship Centre Program (FCF-FCP) funding was primarily put toward the salaries of staff that supported and managed cultural programming and programs for Elders, youth, and community wellness.

The lifting of COVID restrictions has allowed Friendship Centres to resume in-person and group programming. Friendship Centres were pleased to report wellattended events and gatherings.

BCAAFC has received confirmation that the funding has been renewed for the 2023-2024 fiscal. However, many Friendship Centres have expressed that they would benefit from long-term, multi-year, and increased funding, which would allow them to develop and deliver more sustainable programming.





Episodes in Season 1 of the Turtle Island Voices podcast

30





Service hours provided to Elders at the Nawican Friendship Centre Foot Care Clinic

Success Stories

The Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre saw huge success with the return of their *Learning the Good Way Youth Conference.* Over 20 youth attended the event focused on role modelling, boundaries, and healthy relationships.

The Port Alberni Friendship Centre realized a long-term goal and held a Baby Welcoming event once COVID restrictions were lifted. The Friendship Centre celebrated the birth of 60 "COVID Babies," welcoming them with lullabies sung by Elders, love and good blessings.

Thanks to FCF-FCP funding, the Nawican Friendship Centre was

able to employ a registered nurse and create a Foot Care Clinic for seniors living with chronic and long-term illnesses. The Elder's foot clinic has been a true blessing providing a safe, tranquil, and private gathering space for Elders to receive fundamental health care that they may otherwise not be able to afford or access.

The Indigenous-focused podcast, *Turtle Island Voices*, supported by the Tansi Friendship Centre Society and FCF-FCP funding, experienced great success in its first season. It resonated deeply with the community and generated continued interest— consistent weekly downloads that highlight its enduring appeal and desire for a second season.

Improving Health Outcomes

Friendship Centres are integral to the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples living in urban and off-reserve areas.

To improve health outcomes for urban Indigenous peoples, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres continues to advocate for an improved, comprehensive, and culturallysafe health system.

We do this through a number of key activities, including but not limited to, developing strategic partnerships, updating the Urban Indigenous Wellness Report, and engaging our members and Friendship Centres across the province. This year, we completed a needs assessment of our 25 Friendship Centres in order to adapt and strengthen our array of postpandemic health services that are offered. Our 2023–2024 work plan is based on the feedback we received from these needs assessments.

Areas of Focus

The concern most frequently mentioned by Friendship Centres is the lack of access to adequate and comprehensive health care. Communities are struggling with overlapping issues like mental health, well-being, burnout, and grief, and many clinical spaces are not culturally safe, accessible, or appropriate, especially mental health services.

Elder care has become more of a challenge post-COVID. Caring for Elders safely is more difficult now than before and many seniors are more isolated than they were in the past and don't have access to their community or kin.

Youth care is also an important area of focus, largely due to a lack of funding for youth supports. As a result, Friendship Centres have been seeing higher rates of youth substance use and suicidality.

Diabetes is a condition that affects all age groups and is a concern for all Indigenous communities. Our plan to help address this issue is to provide connection to a dietitian and/or telehealth care through our Friendship Centres.

Substance use is an issue that will require more attention and interventions. Services would be improved by creating more wraparound care in communities, 24-hour access, and increasing harm-reduction approaches.

Projects & Partnerships

Our primary goal is to increase awareness and understanding of the social determinants of health and their impact on health outcomes within communities. This has led to partnerships and self-testing projects that aim to have an impact despite limited resources and provide autonomy to Indigenous people.

Cancer is a significant concern for Indigenous people as inaccessible health care often leads to late diagnoses. A partnership with BC Cancer Society is working towards offering self-testing for cervical and prostate cancer, self-screening for lung cancer, and increased access to breast cancer screening through their mobile mammogram service.

A partnership with The BC Centre for Disease Control is aiming to remove the stigma and improve education around STI/BBI testing and is set to be implemented by March 2024. The Kemteks Yakwa project will distribute selftesting materials for sexually transmitted infections and bloodborne illnesses as well as maps of services within communities.

What's Ahead

The BCAAFC Health Advocates will conduct ongoing needs assessments through site visits. This will help us develop and distribute educational materials on the social determinants of health and create even more partnerships. Eventually, we hope to evaluate the impact of our work plan on health outcomes in underserved communities.

Student Supports Learning Program

The Student Supports Learning Program (SSLP) strives to ensure that Indigenous youth continue their studies, both academically and traditionally. It also enables relationship-building between Indigenous youth and mentors, tutors, and Elders.

This funding was a response to the growing need for learning supports that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to provide equitable access to educational resources, technology, and culture and it takes a broad approach, recognizing that a young student's education relies on various spheres of influence. The Student Supports Learning Program (SSLP) focuses on four key areas: educational support, mental health and wellness, traditional learning, and extracurricular activities and events.

This year, BCAAFC issued a call for proposals and all of the 19 eligible Friendship Centers that applied for funding were approved. Over \$2.2 million in funding was distributed and Friendship Centers were able to tailor this funding to best suit the unique needs of the students in their community.

The flexible and comprehensive nature of this funding has been greatly appreciated by Friendship Centres as it enables them to meet students and youth where they are at. It also allows them to provide unique and specific services and supports tailored to each student and situation.

Unfortunately, this funding was in response to the COVID pandemic and has not yet been extended beyond March 2024.

The National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (NAFC) is advocating for funding renewal and we hope that the successes of this last year demonstrate the value and impact that this youth funding has in communities. Core youth funding that is reliable and long-term is greatly needed.

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

Success Stories

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society used SSLP funds to provide educational support to youth with a new drop-in space for afterschool tutoring, workshops, and access to technology. They also offered land-based programming and activities (hiking, backpacking, medicine and food harvesting, hunting, snowshoeing and canoeing) where youth built a connection to the land and learned to practice stewardship.

The Hiye'ye Lelum (House of Friendship) Society implemented The Dream Weavers Program and important life skills education. This component helps to provide

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job readiness supports like resume writing, first aid, and other certificate programs. It also includes practical skills for dayto-day living like communication, conflict resolution, developing independence, and strengthening community connections.

Nawican Friendship Center expanded its existing youth programming at their Nawican Bergeron Youth & Cultural Centre with activities to support long-term learning and health. Youth can benefit from workshops, classes, and space to hang out, while also having access to supports for academic success, domestic problems, substance use, and mental health issues.



Education

The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) provides eligible First Nations students with funding to access educational opportunities at the post-secondary level, including university and college entrance programs.

The First Citizens Fund (FCF) Student Bursary Program provides financial awards to Indigenous students enrolled in post-secondary education.

Both of these funding streams help to reduce the financial barriers to accessing postsecondary education for First Nations and Indigenous students. Post-secondary funding supports like PSSSP and FCF assist students with the financial costs of postsecondary education and help to reduce the added financial stress that many people experience while continuing their education.

In many cases, students are not only moving away from their family homes, but they are also leaving their community and support networks. This financial support allows students to focus on completing their chosen program of study and feel secure and confident in their post-secondary decisions and experiences.

Over the past fiscal year, 43 students were supported through

the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) and 71 students were awarded First Citizens Fund Student Bursaries. That is 114 students in total (33 of whom are in Continuing Studies).

However, both programs continue to get more applicants than there is funding for and we have to make the tough call to deny a large number of students—many of whom have nowhere else to turn for post-secondary funding.

It is clear that these funding programs are essential and effective, yet the funding amount has not kept up with the rising cost of living and the rising cost of postsecondary education. "I wanted to take the time to say how grateful I am that I was selected to receive the funding to go to College. Animation is a very big passion of mine so having this opportunity will be an amazing push into my dream job. I can't even begin to describe how this will impact my future and I am so happy to be able to attend a school where I absolutely love what I learn."

Online Application

BCAAFC is currently creating an online application process for the First Citizens Fund and the Post Secondary Student Support Program to enhance accessibility, shorten processing times, and better collect data for reporting, advocacy, and record keeping.

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Students awarded FCF bursaries



Students graduated from their post-secondary programs



Students supported through PSSSP

"As an older student, balancing life with studies, work, and bills hasn't been the easiest; however, because of you, I can truly focus on what is the most important—my education. So I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, and will continue to honor my commitment to my studies, my heritage as a Métis person, and my continued belief that when I need help, there are people out there ready and willing to be by my side."

Employment, Life Skills and Training

The Employment, Life Skills and Training (ELST) initiative was developed to support meaningful employment for Indigenous Peoples. The ELST initiative is currently offered in 14 Friendship Centres and supports individuals in securing employment, gaining higher-level employment, completing secondary education, and pursuing post-secondary education.

The Employment, Life Skills and Training (ELST) initiative provides valuable employment supports such as career counselling, job search assistance, and cover letter and resume writing. The ELST program also allows Friendship Centres to provide financial support and application assistance to clients for their educational upgrading, post-secondary education, and trade and technical certifications. Friendship Centres have the unique ability to offer these services in a culturally safe way and provide tailored supports that increase participant success. Friendship Centres are very engaged with their community and offer low-barrier, status-blind programs and services. Through their Friendship Centres, clients can receive referrals to other inhouse and external services (i.e., wrap-around care).

Training Delivery

Friendship Centres offer both individual supports and group training through the ELST program. This year, we have increased the number of clients served and also refined the programming being offered.

Friendship Centres delivered training around life skills (e.g., communication, Dress for Success, interview preparedness), Standard First Aid, Food Safe Level 1, and Serving It Right.

Wonderful group training events included ICBC Accredited Drivers License Training, Occupational First Aid Level 3, Dude's Club, Her Canoe Journey, Community Security, Traffic Control Person Training, Steps to Success, ProSafe Training, and Mental Health First Aid.

Unfortunately, the ELST program only receives enough funding to support programming in 14 Friendship Centres. More money is needed to have Employment Services available in all 25 Friendship Centres across B.C.

People achieved employment

What's Ahead

ELST program funding is made available annually, with no guaranteed start date. This frequently creates a funding gap (as is anticipated to be the case for June/July 2023). Long-term and secure funding would create stability and greatly increase the program's impact.



People completed training or accessed supports





Success Stories

The Steps for Success program at the Nawican Friendship Society helped a 39-year-old client immensely. The first couple of days in the program were tough due to a few severe injuries the client had; however, with some adjustments and help from fellow participants, he soon began to come out of his shell.

Though it took some time, he eventually found the inspiration to become a social worker and applied for further education in the field of social work. Soon after, this client was accepted into a postsecondary social work program. He is excited to continue down this new path.

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A family that was new to Port Hardy attended the Resume and Cover Letter Workshop at Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre. The son, a young adult, never thought it would be possible to make a resume and cover letter without any work experience.

The workshop facilitators worked very closely with everyone and the young man managed to make a glowing resume and cover letter highlighting his skills and volunteer work. The workshop increased his confidence and he successfully gained employment at a retail store where he now works fulltime. His supervisor says he is an excellent addition to the team and that he always goes above and beyond!



"If it wasn't for steps to success, I wouldn't be here. Thank you for giving me hope and helping me find happiness again."

- Nawican Friendship Society Client

Friendship Centre Training Program

The Friendship Centre Training Program is an online training source that offers free bimonthly training to all Friendship Centre staff across B.C. Courses take place remotely over Zoom and vary from half-day seminars to month-long programs with recurring weekly sessions.

This training program strives to increase capacity, provide resources, and foster connection for Friendship Centre staff across B.C. Course topics are selected based on feedback and requests from Friendship Centres as well as common needs, skills, and professional development identified by BCAAFC staff. Balancing training needs and time commitments has been difficult. Participants often want more in-depth training, but they don't always have the time to devote to longer courses.

With the COVID-19 pandemic slowly becoming less threatening, there is less interest in spending time on Zoom and more desire to connect in person.

We have had very positive feedback from Friendship Centres regarding the training opportunities we have offered over the past year. We plan to run additional offerings of many courses from the past year in the coming months as well as new training opportunities on topics that have been in high demand and frequently requested.

Given that many people have expressed fatigue with online programs, we are also looking at hosting a few in-person training opportunities in the coming year.

Accomplishments

The Friendship Centre Training Program partners with accredited training institutions and trusted content experts. That means we are able to provide accessible, relevant, and cost-effective training and professional development opportunities for Friendship Centre staff across a range of topics including Foundations of Proposal Writing, Project Management Essentials, Bullying and Harassment in an Indigenous Workplace, and Introduction to Canva (a graphic design tool).

Though bullying & harassment is often a difficult topic to discuss, we had a skilled Indigenous facilitator that provided a valuable Indigenous perspective. Participants responded very well and many have requested to host this workshop at their Friendship Centres respectively.

Next Steps

Moving forward, BCAAFC has identified a need for regular training on Information Technology topics and tools. Digital and IT scams are getting more sophisticated by the day and we all need to stay educated and informed with regular training and updates.





Staff from 17 Friendship Centres participated in training



Points of service last fiscal year



Staff members completed training programs

Aboriginal Infant Development Programs

The BCAAFC has held the provincial office contract for the Aboriginal Infant Development Program (AIDP) since 2006 and the Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program (ASCD) since 2010.

The AIDP/ASCD provincial office provides support and educational information to Indigenous children and their families and has AIDP workers throughout the province.

Given the nature of this program and the work it does, the AIDP team is thankful that in-person gatherings can be done safely and comfortably once more. Zoom, Skype, and conference calls allowed us to meet during the height of the pandemic and they can still be used for short or informal meetings. But they can never truly replace the opportunity to gather together in person, connect, and communicate face to face.

Program and community visits have resumed and are being scheduled. The goal is to establish regular, consistent gatherings for the AIDP regions.

Committee Participation

The Aboriginal Infant Development Program is involved in (participating and chairing) several provincial committees: The Early Years Conference Planning Committee, the BC Healthy Child Development Alliance, AHSABC Advisory Council, RCY/ CYSN Partners Committee, MCFD Ministers Advisory Council, and the Kids Can't Wait Working Group (facilitated by Inclusion BC).

Support Services

Since AIDP is still doing most training virtually, there was an opportunity to partner with the BC Council for Families on Home Visiting Training and Trauma Informed and Cultural Safety Practices. Program team members continue to be encouraged to use annual professional development funds for other relevant education and training.

Over the past year, there were a few requests for support from AIDP supervisors. While they are proud of their staff and the work being done, supervisors are also concerned about compassion fatigue and stress. The BC Council for Families has virtual workshops on these topics and information has been shared with AIDP frontline teams as needed or requested.

There have also been requests for Ages and Stages Questionnaires training. The AIDP team is re-



Presentations, workshops, and meetings over Zoom

building its facilitator pool for this training. Once facilitators are in place and available, we will follow up with the requests.

Teachings of the Elders

The second volume of **Teachings of the Elders** is still in development. While this project is taking longer than anticipated, it is not a process to be rushed. The teachings of our Elders are being honoured and respected; there is no deadline.



In-person presentations, workshops, and meetings

When it is complete, the new volume will be in celebration of AIDP's 30th anniversary and will be dedicated to our Elders and residential school survivors.

While the first volume had a Coast Salish focus, this one will have a provincial scope with teachings from Elders from our 57 AIDP

programs. Beautiful artwork has been commissioned from three different artists that will accompany family photos and photos of our Elders.

Partnerships Project

The Partnerships Project is a community-based training for practitioners and caregivers who support children with special needs and their families.

The training modules provide participants with knowledge and skills in various topics to increase their ability to support the children and families in their community settings. Work is planned to refresh aspects of the project that have been dormant including reviewing and updating modules and then creating online modular training.

AIDP 30th Anniversary

AIDP front-line workers, supervisors, and program managers gathered with parents and guests from the program's early years for the AIDP 30th anniversary celebration.

They were joined by parents from all years of the program's life and past staff from the 1992 Cowichan Tribes and Nuu Chah Nulth Tribal Council. There were AIDP staff who had been with the program for less than a year and many others who have been with the program for a decade or longer. BCAAFC blanketed all of the AIDP staff who have been with the program for 15 years or longer and gifted all the others with a mini blanket.

Recognizing Diana Elliott

We also want to wish Diana Elliott, the long-serving provincial leader of Aboriginal Infant Development Programs a wonderful retirement. Diana is a widely-recognized expert and a humble leader who has devoted 30 years to this important work. She is deeply passionate about this work and her dedication and commitment to this field have been invaluable. In her early days leading this program, she made her mark by outright refusing to let the provincial government cut the funding as they had planned. From there, her impact grew and grew. And it will be felt for generations.

Additional Reporting

The Ministry of Children and Family Development provides funding for AIDP/ASCD under two-year contracts. For more information and full annual reports, please visit each website at <u>www.aidp.bc.ca</u> and <u>www.ascdp.bc.ca</u>.

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Number of AIDP staff who have been with the program 15+ years



Professional development funds distributed

B Lifestyles



Professional development funding applications

Child Care and Early Years

The goal of the BCAAFC Child Care Planner is to build strong and meaningful relationships with Friendship Centre management and front-line staff. This program offers valuable support to all 25 Friendship Centres by providing professional development and creating connections between Indigenous community partners and service providers and urban Indigenous families with children in the early years.

During 2022 and 2023, the Child Care Planner (CCP) continued building the Early Years Community of Practice. The CCP travelled to four regions across B.C. and brought together Friendship Centre staff to engage in full-day "Caring for the Caregiver" workshops. Facilitator Madelaine McCallum guided caregivers through a journey of self-love and empowerment. Each event involved a resurgence of culture, songs, ceremony, and healing. Participants left with their cups overflowing and were eager to share their learning with their colleagues and the children and families they serve.

What's Ahead

The diversity of Friendship Centres, their programs, and the urban Indigenous families we serve can be challenging to navigate with a single approach. However, our strategy of developing and growing a Community of Practice specifically for Friendship Centres is having a notable impact.

We will look more closely at ways to remove the barriers to providing quality child care (e.g., space, staff, funding) over the next year. And we will organize additional gatherings of the Early Years Community of Practice (both virtual and in-person) to maintain those connections and continue important conversations about childcare programming.

In-person gatherings at Friendship Centres and welcoming invitations encouraging communities to visit their Friendship Centre will continue to build strong relationships with the BCAAFC CCP and the early years staff at Friendship Centres across B.C.

The CCP is also working on revisions and additions to the BCAAFC Child Care Resource Manual. They will include additional information about creating child care spaces and updates released by the government.

BCAAFC EARLY YEARS COMMUNITY & PRACTICE



"What an amazing experience! My heart is overfilled with gratitude and happiness. 'As I Am, Is Enough' I am spreading love to all I see and meet."

- Amy, Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society "Thank you! It is always incredible to meet other women, hear their stories, and share our challenges."

- Joanne, Dze' L K'ant Friendship Centre Society "Thank you again for holding this workshop! My staff will use the message of self-confidence to help them feel empowered in their positions in a difficult room."

- Carlissa, Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association

Board of Directors 2022/2023

Elijah Mack, Acting PresidentConayt Friendship SocietyFabian Alexis, Treasurer/SecretaryNorth Okanagan Friendship Centre SocietyCalvin Albright, DirectorKamloops Aboriginal Friendship SocietyTami Omeasoo, DirectorVancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre SocietyRosanna McGregor, DirectorCariboo Friendship SocietyCarol Camille, DirectorLillooet Friendship Centre SocietyCyndi Stevens, NAFC Board RepresentativePort Alberni Friendship Center

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

Elders Council

Marge White 'Na-cha-uks' Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society

Basil 'Buzz' Morissette Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society

Minnie Kenoras Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society

Laura Fortin Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association

Wally Samuel Port Alberni Friendship Center

Stanley Namox Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society <image>



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Staff Team

Adam Fitchett **Brin Wylie Brooke Shaughnessy Cassandra George Charlie George Dalious McCullough David Murphy Debbie Solomon Dixie Hunt-Scott Draven Clemah Emilie Luhowy Jackie Watts Jacquie Snelling-Welsh** Jenn Douglass Jessica Mugford

GOV Team Social Service Sector Advocate Member Services Team Lead Health Advocate **Director of First Impressions: Cultural Support** Member Services Program Assistant **Communications Officer Finance Assistant** Provincial Advisor for AIDP **GOV** Assistant Administrative Assistant for Special Projects Aboriginal Supported Child Development Provincial Advisor Team Lead, Health & Family Services Admin Coordinator to the General Manager AIDP/ASCD Administrative Assistant

Julie Robertson Laura Alfaro **Leslie Varley** Marissa Jim Melissa Reinhardt Nathan Ponce Nikki Scott Noella Horoscoe **Richard Stern Ricki-Lee Jewell** Stephanie Cameron-Johnson Terri Stachowiz Vanessa Daniels **Yvonne Trott** Victor Mema

General Manager Disability Coordinator Executive Director Doula Program Assistant Research and Data Analyst Student Support and PAYC Coordinator Child Care Coordinator Health Advocate **Director of Information Technology Communications** Coordinator GOV team and Doula Program Assistant Friendship Centre Contracts Manager Friendship Centre Contract Administrator **ELST** Coordinator Finance Manager



Annual General Report

Funder Acknowledgements

PAYC

Thank you to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation for providing funding to support the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council's work and to the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective and National Association of Friendship Centre's Youth Council for their guidance and collaboration.

Elders Council

Thank you to Employment and Social Development Canada and the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for supporting the BCAAFC Elders Council.

COVID Response

Thank you to the National Association of Friendship Centres, Indigenous Services Canada, and the BC Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for the ongoing COVID-19 response funding and Indigenous Community Support Funds.

Provincial Capacity

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Thank you for funding the improvement and expansion of Friendship Centre infrastructure.

UPIP

Funding under the UPIP contract is provided by Indigenous Services Canada. We raise our hands to the National Association of Friendship Centres for their ongoing work to secure stable core funding.

FCF-FCP

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Thank you for supporting the delivery of social and cultural programming to urban Indigenous peoples.

Health

We gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by the Ministry of Health to support the ongoing health initiatives and positions at the BCAAFC.

SSLP

Thank you to the National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres and Employment and Social **Development Canada for providing** funding for the BCAAFC Student Supports Learning Program.

ELST

Thank you to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills for supporting the Employment, Life Skills, and Training Program.

Training

Thank you to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for supporting the **BCAAFC Friendship Centre Training** Program.

Education

Thank you to Indigenous Services Canada for supporting the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation for supporting the FCF Student Bursary Program.

Child Care Planner

Thank you to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for providing funding to support the BCAAFC Child Care Planner position.



National Association of Friendship Centres



Indigenous Services Services aux Autochtones Canada



Emploi et Développement social Canada







Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills









NAFC

BCAAFC is a proud member of the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC).

Thank you to the NAFC Team for their guidance, advocacy, and support.

We are so grateful for everything you do and we are so proud of the shared success of our growing urban Indigenous family.



National Association of Friendship Centres

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