

# VICTORIA NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE



## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal year April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

“VNFC respectfully acknowledges the territory of the Lək̓ʷəŋən People, known today as the Songhees & Xwsepsum on whose land we live, work, learn and prosper.”

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**VICTORIA NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE**  
**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**  
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# VNFC History, Mandate, Goals, Objectives, Structure, Community Partners and Organization Data

## 1. History

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The **Victoria Native Friendship Centre** has been in existence since 1969. We provide services to the estimated 15,000 Indigenous people living off reserve in the greater Victoria area and southern Vancouver Island, as well as the 5,000 residents of First Nations communities from Port Renfrew to Sidney and as far north as Mill Bay. The Centre also provides temporary assistance to a sizeable population of Indigenous individuals and families from First Nations and urban Centres across Canada.

## 2. Mandate

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“To encourage and promote the well-being of Urban Aboriginal People, by strengthening individuals, family, and community.”

## 3. Goals and Objectives

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The goals and objectives of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre are:

- ◆ To meet the needs of people of First Nations origin who are making a transition to the urban community,
- ◆ To provide central and suitable facilities where counselling, information, guidance and referral services will be provided, and where meetings and educational, cultural and recreational activities may be held,
- ◆ To create a better understanding between Native and Non-Native citizens, and promote planning with government, health, welfare, church and other agencies to improve the quality of services and facilities for First Nations people in the community,
- ◆ To assist and undertake, if necessary, any program or activity designed to promote the welfare of people of First Nations origin in the community,
- ◆ To encourage the public to take an informed interest in the promotion of these objectives and in the general wellbeing of First Nations people.

## 4. Structure

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The Victoria Native Friendship Centre is the largest multi-service urban Indigenous organization in Victoria. The Centre's administration and programs and services operate out of a facility located on traditional territory of the Lekwungan Peoples.

A ten-member volunteer Board of Directors sets Centre policy and direction, provides community input into the development of programs and services, and ensures that all segments of the urban Indigenous community and local First Nations have access to those programs and services.

The Centre has a management structure, which ensures financial and program accountability and that provides for the efficient and effective delivery of an extensive package of community-based programs and services.

## 5. Memberships and Affiliations

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The Victoria Native Friendship is a United Way member agency. The Centre is affiliated with the First Nations Interagency Committee, the First Nations Health Committee, Wil'nux Employment and Training, Indigenous Education Advisory Board (Camosun College), CAPC, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, South Island Indigenous Authority, Downtown Services Providers, Victoria Chamber of Commerce and others.

## 6. Funding Sources

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The Centre receives program and administration funding from a variety of federal, provincial, and Indigenous organizations. To list a few these, include Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry for Children and Family Development, Island Health Authority, The Victoria Foundation; First Citizen's Fund; Coast Salish Employment and Training Society; Community Action Program for Children; the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and the National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

## 7. Community Partners

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VNFC greatly appreciates all funders and donors of the programs and services provided. We could not provide the services to the community without your support.

The following are some of the VNFC funders, community partner agencies and organizations.

- Songhees First Nation
- Esquimalt Nation
- Scia'new First Nation (Beecher Bay)
- T'Sou-ke First Nation
- Tsawout First Nation
- Tsartlip First Nation
- Tseycum First Nation
- Pauquachin First Nation
- Malahat First Nation
- Pacheedaht First Nation
- National Association of Friendship Centres
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- Coast Salish Employment & Training Society
- Camosun College
- University of Victoria
- School District 61 – Indigenous Nations Education Division (INED)
- School District 62 Indigenous Education
- M'akola Group of Societies
- BC Housing
- AHMA
- Coast Capital Savings
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Rina M. Bidin Foundation
- Van City Credit Union
- City of Victoria
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness
- Island Health Authority
- First Nations Health Authority
- Capital Health Region
- Cool Aid
- Community Action Program for Children
- (CAPC)
- INAC
- Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre
- Victoria Best Babies
- Parent Support Services
- Good Food Box
- Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
- Aboriginal Headstart
- Success by Six
- Victoria Foundation
- Hulitlan Social Services
- Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services
- BC Civic Forfeiture
- Bosa Foundation
- Telus Community Fund
- Canada Post
- Bank of Nova Scotia
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Pacific Blue Cross
- CFC Investment Readiness Fund
- Saanich Municipality
- Victoria Rapid Relief Fund
- United Way of South Vancouver Island
- Vancouver Foundation
- Y Mindfulness Training
- All the local quilters and knitters who donate handmade baby quilts and baby clothes for our newborns
- Ecologist
- Maytree Foundation
- Honda Foundation
- Metcalf Foundation
- McConnell Foundation
- Rotary Harbourside
- Vandekerkhove Foundation
- Jawl Family Foundation
- Bosa Family Foundation
- Second Harvest
- Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- Catherine Donnelly Foundation
- CMHC- Housing Challenge
- Fortis BC
- Home Depot- Langford
- Indigenous People's Resilience Fund
- Kiwanis Club
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- First Peoples Cultural Council- Braided Knowledge Fund
- BC Arts Council
- Service Canada-UNDRIP
- Heritage Canada- Truth and Reconciliation
- Victoria Real Estate Board
- Health Canada
- McLean Foundation
- New Relationship Trust
- FPCC- also Sense of Place, Heritage Stewardship
- Order of St John
- Indigenous Agriculture Fd of BC
- Provincial Employees Community Service Fund
- BC Pension staff
- Indigenous Reconciliation Fund- Catholic Diocese
- BC Gaming
- TD Challenge

## **Board of Directors Report April 2022 – March 2023**

### **Victoria Native Friendship Centre**

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Tansi kiya awaw Greetings and welcome to our friends, families, elders, VNFC staff, community members, funders and supporters. I offer much gratitude to those whose traditional territories we gather and work on as part of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. The territories of the Ləkʷəŋən (Esquimalt, and Songhees), Malahat, Pacheedaht, Scia'new, T'sou-ke and Wsáneć (Pauquachin, Tsartlip, Tsawout, Tseycum) peoples. I am grateful for all the ways these nations have cared for and stewarded the land, waters and all living beings.

In Fall of 2022, the Board of Directors elected me as the President, and I am thankful to each of them for entrusting me with this responsibility. I offer much gratitude and raise my hands to Shelley Cardinal for all her years of contributing and leading with grace and dignity as the President. I am thankful she has stayed on as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President as I rely on her wisdom, history and knowledge immensely.

The Friendship Centre movement has been integral in my life's journey, including where I began my healing and sobriety journey. I have also worked in various capacities in Friendship Centres and my family, and I have been generously cared for by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. I will always be grateful for the way staff cared for my Dad, both when he was a vital member here and in the last months as cancer depleted his vitality. Being on the Board of Directors is a way I can contribute back to all that has been gifted to me and my family.

#### **Board Members Update**

I would like to welcome our two new Board members: Shelagh Rogers and Gabe Paul.

Shelagh is a member of the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria and is a journalist. She is well known for her work on CBC, especially The Next Chapter.

Gabe's traditional name is Kasolas and they are 20 years old and from Tsartlip and Kwakwaka'wakw from Campbell River. Gabe brings a breadth of experience and wisdom.

We are excited to have both of them join our Board and are grateful for all the ways they are already contributing to our discussions, decisions and planning.

I would also like to offer much gratitude to Sage Lacerte who served as our Youth Representative from 2018 until 2022. Sage aged out of the role and now sits on the Board as a member.

#### **Board training:**

On September 23rd & 24th the Board participated in Board Governance Training with Strong Circle.

Our session was led by Amy Woodruffe and was designed to deepen our understanding of our Board roles and responsibilities in the times we are living in. The two days included time to build relationships and gather guidance on good governance, Indigenous led approaches, Board responsibilities, communication plans, and also included initial discussions regarding a strategic plan.

A highlight of this time for me was hearing from each Board member what it was that brought them to be of service on the board. Another highlight and incredibly valuable contribution was having previous Board member, Janice Simcoe join us. Her leadership and history, both with VNFC and in our community in general, provided unique perspectives and questions for us to reflect on in our roles and the planning for next steps.

A couple important steps came out of the planning.

1. Feedback gathering for the Executive Director. Reciprocal Consulting was hired and we are grateful to all who contributed in the feedback and support of our Executive Director.
2. The process began to create a Strategic Plan. We are excited to be hosting the Strategic Planning session in September 2023.

### **National Association of Friendship Centres**

The National Association of Friendship Centres held their 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting in Victoria last summer. VNFC had a huge role in ensuring this event and gathering unfolded in a warm and generous way. Thank you to Ron, Kari, Lisa and all the staff who worked to host so graciously. At the opening ceremonies, I had the privilege to represent the Board and offering Welcoming and Congratulations remarks.

### **Housing**

Housing is a serious need here in Greater Victoria and outlying areas and we as a Board continue to explore various ways we can be of support to urban Indigenous folk in need of housing. Part of this is the creation a Housing Committee. We have been approached by the Province to create more housing opportunities for Urban Indigenous people; with a focus on housing for Indigenous youth. We have been searching for property to help meet this need. A need that only seems to be growing and becoming more pressing. We as a board have and continue to have conversations about next best steps forward.

Some of you will be familiar with Marion Cummings and her generous contributions to the Friendship Centre. Surrounded by loved ones at her home, Marion passed on Monday morning, August 1st, on the Lekwungen territories of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, known as Oak Bay (Victoria), BC. We are incredibly grateful for this beautiful gift and are taking time to consider best ways to use this gift. Shelley Cardinal, Ron Rice, Lisa Mercure and myself attended the honouring of her life. Ron spoke at the service and beautifully shared about the human Marion was and her kind ways.

In closing, I offer my thanks to the Board members for volunteering their time and for having dreams and hopes for a vibrant path forward. Much gratitude to the leadership team and entire staff and elders of VNFC.

With gratitude and respect, Monique Gray Smith  
VNFC President



## Executive Director’s 2022 - 2023 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by  
Ron Rice, MGC – Wush’q

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On behalf of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre Board, management, and staff I would like to acknowledge the territory of the Lekwungen people, who for the last 53 years

have welcomed us graciously. I am pleased to present my report to you as your Executive Director.

As always, I want to express my appreciation for the VNFC management and staff. Their dedication to the work we do and to the community we serve continues to reinforce how proud I am to be working with them each day. Additionally, I would like to raise my hands to my friend and right-hand woman Kari Hutchison. There are no words to explain the strength of our relationship other than to say I couldn’t do this work without her.

Where did the time go....? Over this past year the programming for the VNFC seemed to just grow while we tried to increase funding in some other long-term contracts. Some successful, some not so much, but we have grown over the last few years. We have expanded our medical clinic while at the same time trying to create space for a new purpose-built clinic off-site. The annex for our wellness and medical clinic will be just down the road at the plaza at Gorge & Tillicum. The search for the Youth Housing property continues along with another property for a Complex Care Housing program, the new program was reported at our last AGM because the contract has been in draft form since February 2022 and as I write this report, we are reviewing the final draft of the agreement.

Though we have known the need for more office space for a few years now. The end of the pandemic and the blended remote-work model made it abundantly clear of our needs for added office space. We have added an administrative annex for approximately 17 staff. These are staff who don't need to host community in their office space.

Last winter our Seasonal Shelter opened late because of dramatic staff shortages, in the fall/winter 22/23 we didn't open until mid-December. We will do our best to open our shelter on time. Over this calendar year we have worked hard to fill vacancies on staff. This is not a new challenge for VNFC but one we now face with other agencies and employers.

I want to thank the volunteers who make up our board of directors for their continued diligence, commitment, passion and support as we worked through another bustling year. They empower me and the VNFC staff so we can serve the community in all the ways we do. This year we undertook a process to create a new strategic plan for VNFC. Board members, VNFC senior staff, VNFC Elders and community partners came together for two days to create a vision for VNFC and the coming years. That plan will be published this fall/winter and will be just the tool we need to ensure our growth is sustained and our goals made clear.

VNFC has been thinking of ways to disrupt the industry and economy surrounding Cowichan Sweaters. It started nearly four years ago as we contemplated purchasing two stores on Government Street. A local businessman, Rene Gautier founder/CEO for Ecologyst, was offering advice which led us to narrow our focus to the Cowichan Sweater. In 2023 knitters of these iconic garments, made in communities throughout Coast Salish territories, still only earn approximately \$1/hr. We came up with a list of solutions including access to a reliable wool source, a living wage for knitters and raising the profile of the garment in the eyes of the consumer. Through a series of right-place right-time scenarios we found ourselves across the table from CBC TV and them taking our idea and twisting it into a 44-minute documentary. Over the past year we have been buying Cowichan Sweaters at a fair price and we have been shooting a documentary. October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the documentary, 'The Cowichan Sweater: Our Knitted Legacy' (directed by Cowichan filmmaker Mary Galloway, Executive Produced by me), will be available to stream on CBC Gem and will be broadcast nationally on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. VNFC will start selling Cowichan Sweaters October 12<sup>th</sup> for \$1,000.00 to people in our community who understand quality and who support justice for the masterful craft and the artists who make them.

I want to raise my hands to the community who have come back to us with open arms. It has been a monumental challenge to keep our programs running and staff employed but through it all you understood our changes and limitations and when the doors opened you came back with a smile (we could sense it through your masks, remember masks). Although the pandemic is over the difficulties created for our economy can still be felt. We can now gather together and share a meal or spend time in circle. For it all I am grateful.

Many of you will recall the generosity of a gentle woman named Marion Cumming to the Friendship Centre. VNFC will, annually, honour Marion and Bruce Cumming for their lifelong efforts of Reconciliation and the wonderful gifts that were donated to VNFC. For those of you who had not heard, she has donated two houses to us. The first in Cowichan Station, approximately 30 mins north of here and the second we will receive in December 2023 situated in Oak Bay.

While we are on the subject of generosity. We can't say enough about the many generous individuals, couples, families, community & family foundations and corporations who have given so generously to our work. We tell stories of ideas and solutions, of growing and thriving, of victories and triumph, people want to be a part of those stories. I am thrilled to acknowledge one family foundation in particular this year. The Rina M Bidin Foundation, led by our Friend Nina Lyons, has been working with VNFC for over 12 years. During that time the foundation has provided funding to VNFC programs and causes that matter to us. Most recently the Rina M Bidin Foundation supported the much-needed upgrades to our daycare playgrounds by offering us one of the largest gifts they have ever given \$100,000. We would like to acknowledge the many gifts provided in the name of Rina M Bidin in two ways. First by naming one of the playgrounds "The Rina M Bidin Friendship & Culture Park...in the spirit of Reconciliation". Second, we would like to blanket the foundation executive director and niece to Rina, Nina Lyons.

Huy tsep q'u – Thanking you all

# Aboriginal Infant Development Program 2022 - 2023 Annual Report



**Respectfully submitted by:** Rebecca Mabee, Program Manager AIDP & FASD

*Reporting Period:* April 2022 – March 2023

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## **Staff**

Mandy Griffiths  
Maria Sampson  
Madeleine Begin

Every child is a unique gift from the Creator. The Mission of the Aboriginal Infant Development Programs is to honour this gift by supporting the development of Indigenous children within the context of the family, community, and culture and by offering access to culturally appropriate early intervention and prevention support programs.

The Aboriginal Infant Development Program is a free, voluntary and family centered support service. We provide support to families living in their home communities of the South Vancouver Island region, which includes the ten local First Nations (Malahat, Tseycum, Tsawout, Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Sc'ianew, T'sou-ke, Pacheedaht, Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations), as well as the Métis and Urban Indigenous communities.

## **How the Infant Development Program works:**

in partnership with your family. Your AIDP Consultant will visit you in your home or wherever you feel most comfortable. Plan fun and engaging activities together to build on your child's strengths. Provide parenting support. Provide developmental screenings and assessments for your child if you choose with your permission, we can get extra support for your child in areas such as speech, language, motor skills, feeding, hearing, vision, stress and anxiety.

## **AIDP this year**

AIDP has been busy this year with staff visiting homes and attending meetings to support the children and families. Food security is still a concern for the families this year. Eighty per cent of the families working with AIDP receive hampers from VNFC. We continue building our relationships with MCFD, Child and Youth Mental Health and Queen Alexander. AIDP staff visit Pacheedaht with the Jordan's principle and speech staff. Maria taught cedar and wool weaving and encouraged the women in their creative and mental process.



## **Neurodiversity Keyworker and Parent Support Program**

### **Staff**

**Danielle Low**



The Neurodiversity keyworker and parent support program consists of one consultant who works with families to support their child affected with FASD and other similar neurodevelopmental conditions from 0 to 19 years of age.

The program consists of:

- Mentorship to increase knowledge and confidence of children, youth, and caregivers to empower families.
- Assisting families to select and access appropriate services by providing information on available programs and supportive services, health, and education services.
- Supporting the implementation of strategies and activities to help children and youth experience less frustration at home and at school.
- Supporting families and youth throughout the assessment/diagnostic process.
- Enhance the understanding of professionals, service providers and the community about FASD. Keeping up to date and well informed about FASD research. Updating resources on a regular basis.
- Identify the strengths of Indigenous worldviews and traditional healing practices and seek out opportunities to incorporate Indigenous perspectives in the delivery of supports.



### **Workshop sensory tools and fidgets**

This year has proven to be very busy for Danielle, connecting with families and building strong supportive relationships through home visits and phone consultations. Danielle's work includes advocating for children and youth with other service providers, MCFD, within the education and healthcare systems. Danielle would meet with families and youth to provide information, make strategy suggestions, provide practical and emotional support, transportation to medical appointments, and crisis intervention. The keyworker also developed and facilitated a sensory activity exploration workshop for children and youth with the goal of supporting children and youth with identifying their sensory needs and developing a healthy sensory diet.

**Thank you for reading.**



# Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program 2022 - 2023 Annual Report

## **Respectfully submitted by:**

Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Manager of Aboriginal Supported Child Development

*Reporting Period: April 2022 – March 2023*

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The ASCD team has been working to support the families who are on our current case load. We do have a waitlist at this time. We are looking at opportunities to address the staff shortage. There is a potential for additional supported child development funds from MCFD and we are organizing a proposal to support community centres and support workers with additional training.

## **Program Team:**

*Kari-Ann Leadbitter - ASCD Manager*

*Jordan Stewart - Program Administrator*

*Bianca Gomes - ASCD Consultant*

*Mariel Macasaquit - ASCD Consultant*

## **Highlights of This Reporting Period:**

- 1 student placement - CYC Practicum (University of Victoria)
- One Time Only Funding from MCFD for Indigenous Book Kits and LGBTQ+ Book Kits
- Consultants' in person observations at Daycares, Out-of-school care settings
- Provided Newt Suits to Pacheedaht Daycare so children can play outside no matter the weather.
- Attended two in-person conferences for professional development and networking opportunities
- Kids Action Training
  - Drop-in Kids Action Program was run for after school children for 3 months by ASCD Consultants
- Inclusive Child Care Toolkit Training
  - This will create a larger tool kit for our staff members to use.
- *Inclusive Child Care Toolkit Training package*
- *2 Day Trauma Informed Practice in Childcare Conference*
- *Gender Inclusive and LGBTQ+ in early years training*

## **Statistics:**

Active files                      63

We continue to work on recruitment for the positions that are vacant on the ASCD team. We just recently went from 3 consultants out of 5, to now 2 consultants, out of the 5 available positions.

As part of our commitment to community partnerships, we have continued to be a training site for the KidsAction Neurodiverse Coaching Training and have provided onsite training for VNFC staff this fiscal year. It is hoped that this training can be part of an outreach to daycare, after school and on reserve programming to support and provide additional training for support workers. We ran an after school drop-in program as an ASCD group for KidsAction which did reach children we don't have currently files open with.

We are attending daycares/after school programs that we support at least once a month to provide support (e.g. consultations, resources) to support workers in order for them to support our children in the best way possible - responsive to their needs and goals, and making sure they are included and thrive at their respective settings.

Our limited staff does mean that we have a larger than usual waitlist, with the Manager holding a case load herself. Once the positions are filled, we will no longer have a waitlist.



Pacheedaht Newt Suits



UVic Co-op Student - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place photo contest winner

# CEER Team 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

Career, Employment & Education Resources

“Light Seekers”

Respectfully submitted by

Director – Nadia Salmaniw ~S’ahn N’ahn Guu’as

Reporting Period: April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 – March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023



## CEER team

*CEER Director:*

*Career & Education Guide*

*Career & Education Guide*

*Indigenous Liaison & Career Transition Guide*

*S’ahn N’ahn Guu’as Nadia Salmaniw*

*Sophia Gu*

*Sharon Sam*

*Herman Henry*

We have experienced significant loss this year, with the passing of our dear friend, sister and team member, Sharon Sam. Sharon gave her good energy to community every day....sharing her huge heart with all who crossed her path. Our team will continue to hold her memory in our hearts, for years to come. We miss her deeply.



This is Sophia Gu, our amazing Career and Education Guide. The drum she is holding proudly, we made together, all 3 of us, in honor of our dear friend Sharon. It was incredibly healing as a team to work on this collaboratively. Our drum and the drum stick we made together, now hang in our space. Good medicine for everyone.

## Dreams we are proud of....

Together, our small but mighty team, supported 44 students for **post-secondary studies** this year. 25 Students were welcomed in for Fall semester and an additional 19 students for Winter 2023.

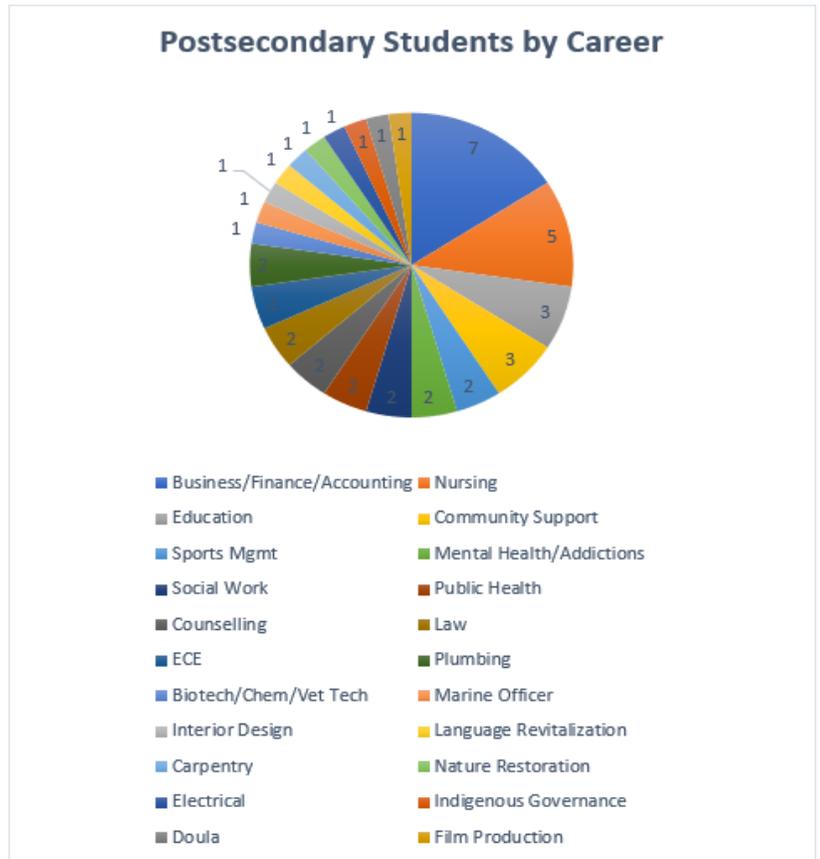
We continue to be in awe of this group of folks, for persevering with their studies despite significant barriers including but not limited to, childcare responsibilities with multiple children, tragedy/grief and

loss, mental health challenges and diverse abilities.

Our sponsored students are pursuing a wide variety of careers.... We have folks pursuing a variety of skilled trades (electrical, and plumbing, construction, as well as Construction Safety Officers). As well, we have nurses, therapists, ECE workers, scientists, IT techs and business majors.

**A Snapshot of our Sponsored Post-Secondary Students Career Goals:**

- 7 Business/Financing/Accounting
- 5 Nurses
- 3 Education/Teachers
- 3 Community Support Workers
- 2 Sports management professionals
- 2 Mental health and addictions workers
- 2 Social workers
- 2 Public health workers
- 2 Counsellors
- 2 Lawyers
- 2 ECE's
- 2 Plumbers
- 1 Vet Technician
- 1 Marine Officer
- 1 Interior Designer
- 1 Language Teacher
- 1 Carpenter
- 1 Land Steward/Land Restoration
- 1 Electrician
- 1 Indigenous Governance
- 1 Doula
- 1 Film Producer
- 1 Film Producer



**Our ELST project (employment program through BCAAFC)** has been extremely successful with 100 + community members served this fiscal year \*exceeded our targets.

*ELST focuses on folks in community who are mid career and who are searching to “grow themselves up”, up-skilling, laddering and or transitioning to mid career/management/leadership roles.*

**Words from Herman Henry on behalf of our ELST program:**

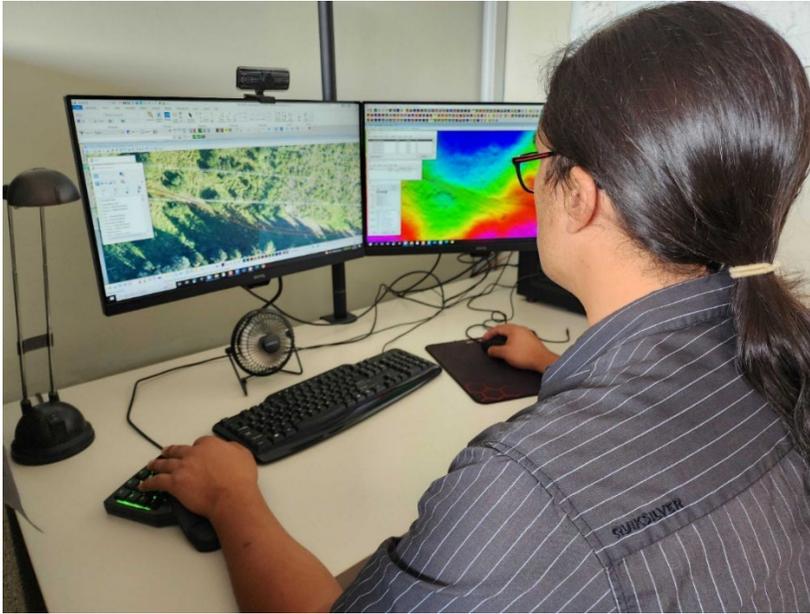
*I am very happy to say that Victoria Native Friendship Centre and the ELST program has helped a **total of 103 Community members** from **April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022-March 31 ,2023.***

*With this number the Target goal was to have **85%** re-enter the labor market and/or advance in their chosen career path(s). Happy to share happy news that this goal was met.*

**Two success stories from the ELST program:**

*This community member secured new employment with Terra Remote Sensing, a company that uses technology to track climate change indicators and other important*

*data.*



*One of our successful L Drivers Training participants, this community member attended our day long classroom instruction to prepare for his L test. Happy to report that, following the training, he passed!*

- Between all of our CEER programming, over 300 new community members have been served over the year! 75% have transitioned into new employment. These supports include post-secondary funding, short term training (First Aid, FoodSafe, Serving it Right etc.) back to work support/purchase of work gear AND tools, bus passes/tickets and assistance with career transitioning and career “match-making”.

**Job Club: A place to gather, share stories, a good cup of coffee and hang out talking with our elders, visitors, team and one another.**

This fiscal year, after several years of being unable to offer our drop in, weekly Job Club program, we have been able to re-launch it.

Folks of all ages come weekly to share stories about the job hunt, support one another, seek support and a kind word from our resident Job Club elders, Fred Samuel and Sky Bellefleur...also enjoying a good cup of a coffee and a baked good from our amazing kitchen staff.

We average 8-10 community members per week for this offering. Folks frequently bring their kids, new babies, and family members. We have been thrilled to welcome in two resident partners to job club as well, John Howard Society and Work BC. In addition to holistic support for the job hunt, folks also receive access to transportation via bus tickets and monthly bus passes as well as drop in 1:1 support for work gear and clothing, when they land a new job. We also do weekly gift card draws with Tim's and grocery cards.

What a way to celebrate the accomplishments of community! This is often a highlight of our week.

**Work Gear Requests:** We tried something new this year with addressing work gear requests in a good way. We hosted x4 "Work Gear Bonanza's". Community members of all ages signed up for half hour appointment times over a 2-day period, meeting with our Career and Education Guides, completing paperwork and receiving a Marks Work Wearhouse Voucher, Work Tools or both. On average, 10 community members were supported per day. We plan to offer this once a quarter in the year ahead as this approach worked well and many community members were able to secure new employment.

**Indigenous Business Mentoring Program:** a 6 month 1:1 mentorship program, where participants receive mentorship as often as they'd like over the phone, by Zoom or by email. We ran two more cohorts of this program this year. On average 29 community members, at all stages of entrepreneurship, received support and mentoring over a 6-month period.

Success Story from Business Mentoring-Cohort 4:

**One of our entrepreneurs is a healer and wellness practitioner. She recently received a few months of concentrated mentorship, on how to prepare for a presentation in front of a group of funders. When asked how the presentation went, she shared the following....**

*It was good, the main teacher said my presentation was engaging, and I hit all the points.*

*One of the professors from UVic told me I exceeded his expectations. He was so excited that he asked me to come to UVic to do an event.*

*Two of the four panelists said they wanted to help me. One runs a business online with a million dollar a year revenue. He said he works on several funding boards, so he offered to help find funding. The Second is a lady who runs a spiritual business, and she has offered to help me find funding too. She and I clicked very well the day before I presented.*

*Even before I presented, she and I became like fast friends. She gave a lot of good ideas on how to improve and grow after my presentation. I have everyone's contact details so I will message them.*

*Thank-you so much for your help.*

*My self-confidence has greatly improved so I believe in myself now, I feel all I have to do is spend time learning and I too can have financial literacy.*

-I.O.

**IndigeMind:** After much planning, partnership building and visioning, we were able to launch our new land-based learning program: IndigeMind. IndigeMind is a Climate Action Leadership offering that takes

youth out on the Land x2/week for 7 weeks. The following are a list of activities that youth engage in, while out on the Land in all weather.

- Invasive species removal (broom and ivy)
- Native species, plant propagation and seeding
- Best land restoration practices
- Sustainable food harvesting and fishing (salmon and crab)
- Cedar pulling and harvesting in a good way
- Preparing fish (cutting, smoking, fileting etc.)
- Cedar weaving
- Elder teachings and story telling

We are grateful for the kind support of FNHA, BCAAFC and the Vancouver Foundation, without whose support, we wouldn't be able to run this important offering and bring youth back to their roots and to the Land.

### **Fostering Connection & Strengthening Partnerships**

- Eyē? Sqā'lewen- weekly connections via phone/email and in person with the Indigenous Advisors at Camosun College, in support of our sponsored students
- University of Victoria- First People's House-connecting sponsored students with indigenous advisors/support on campus and supporting students via Indigenous Career Fair and Mock Interview Hiring Events. Attended Fall Event Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 2022
- John Howard Society: built connection between our two employment services teams. Partnering in support of our weekly job club (began in September and is ongoing) Due to short staffing, they will be attending x1/mth for the foreseeable future.
- Work BC/GT Hiring-bi-weekly connections via phone and email and deepening relationship with new Indigenous Coordinator at their Victoria office.
- MNBC Metis Nation BC-Nanaimo office \*referrals back and forth as needed
- Greater Victoria Harbor Authority-monthly check ins via email and phone, and in person.
- Level Ground Trading-continued donations for hamper program
- Total Support Solutions: partnered to host x3 Microsoft Office Training. Participants received certificate and expertise in Excel, Word and Outlook.
- BC Association of Friendship Centres: We continue to raise our hands to our friends and colleagues at the BCAAFC for their advocacy, care and tireless support for our programming.
- Coast Salish Employment Training Society: Very grateful for the continued support of CSETS. They administer our core funding for employment and training from the federal government. We are grateful for their time, good energy and care as we work together, in support of community.
- Chandos Construction: Hosted 2 hiring events for the National Centre of Indigenous Laws. 4 community members were successfully hired onto the Chandos team and for this historic build, happening at UVIC. We are grateful for this opportunity to work closely with a construction company who truly wants to BE the change, in an industry that still has far to go when it comes to equity and equality on site.
- Drivewise Learning Academy: continued to support folks with Drivewise N training packages, which included classroom time, in car lessons and road test. We have a 75% passing rate with this program and raise our hands in gratitude to the amazing team at Drivewise for their Allyship and support of our indigenous community. Over 25 community members received support to

gain their licenses this year, addressing a major barrier to employment, a lack of transportation.

- L Training: Hosted x3 L classroom learning, day long sessions this year with a 75% passing rate for the L test, following the classroom instruction.

### **Letter of Gratitude from one of our sponsored students attending Camosun College....**

*Receiving funding from the Victoria Native Friendship Center (VNFC) has allowed me to persevere a career in nursing and I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity. Growing up, I always had a passion for healthcare and helping others. However, as an Indigenous individual, I faced, any barriers in accessing education and pursuing a career in nursing. VNFC's financial support has enabled me to overcome these barriers and work towards my dream of becoming a nurse.*

*One of the biggest challenges I faced in pursuing a career in nursing was financial. Nursing programs can be quite expensive, and as an Indigenous person, I did not have the same financial resources as many other students. However, VNFC's funding has allowed me to cover the costs of my education, including tuition fees, textbooks, and other necessary expenses. This has given me the freedom to focus on my studies and work towards my career goals without worrying about financial stress.*

*Moreover, VNFC has also provided me with mentorship and support throughout my nursing journey. As an Indigenous organization, they understand the unique challenges that Indigenous students face in healthcare and have provided me with guidance and advice to navigate these challenges. Their support has not only helped me succeed in my academic studies but has also given me the confidence and encouragement I need to pursue a career in nursing.*

*Another significant benefit of receiving funding from VNFC is that it has allowed me to give back to my community. As an Indigenous nurse, I believe that I can make a difference in improving healthcare outcomes for Indigenous people. With the support of VNFC, I am now able to pursue my nursing career and give back to my community by providing culturally appropriate care and advocating for Indigenous health. In conclusion, receiving funding from VNFC has allowed me to pursue my dream of becoming a nurse, overcome financial barriers, receive mentorship and support, and give back to my community. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities that VNFC has provided me and look forward to making a positive impact as an Indigenous nurse.*

**~F. Barton**

### **Message of Gratitude from one of our successful Drivewise Students...**

*Dear CEER team,*

*Thank you so much for helping me get my driver's license.*

*I'm able to drive to my new job at Hilltop Gardens now 😊*

-L

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## The Journey to Come....

- **Business Mentoring Program:** 5<sup>th</sup> round set to start this Summer 2023. We are excited to continue our good work and welcome in 25-30 new indigenous entrepreneurs...living and breathing the practice of 'Indigenomics' on these Lands.
- **Chandos Construction National Centre of Indigenous Laws Partnership:** continue to assist Chandos with hiring for a variety of positions as needed.
- **Work BC and VNFC:** working closely with the new Indigenous Coordinator (Work BC Victoria) to assist and partner to support community members when appropriate. We will welcome our partners in joining us for our weekly job club.
- **Staffing:** we have been operating short staffed for over a year. CEER will be looking to welcome in 2 more team members to fill our Data Entry/CEER Admin position as well as welcome in another Career and Education Guide.
- **IndigeMind:** CEER Director will be focused on growing this new offering in the coming year. At time of submission, we have successfully launched, and 10 youth have already graduated from this new land based, learning program. We plan to offer a second round this summer and a third in the fall. We continue to seek future funding (long term and multi-year) for this important offering. The youth have shared that not only do they learn more out on the Land, than in the mainstream education systems, but the program, for many youth, gives them "a reason to get out of bed in the morning". We are inspired by our youth every day, and committed to offering them spaces where they can BE, heal, and experience the freedom to be authentically themselves.

*~Haa'wa/thank you for your kind attention, good energy and support of our CEER offerings.  
May you all find ways to appreciate small moments of joy, during this time of transition.... a season of abundance, and renewal, as we step forward into Spring and the new fiscal year ahead.*

# COMMUNITY ACTION & LEARNING TEAM

## 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

Tanya Clarmont, Director  
Katrina Philpotts, Library and Team Lead

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### 1. Team Update

In 2022, the Management Services Team updated, reorganized, and grew. We rebranded as Community Action & Learning, to better align with our offerings, which are programs and services to all residents of Greater Victoria, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with a focus on relationships and community building. Our programs are locally developed, interactive and culturally grounded, and include networking opportunities for those looking to engage more directly, whether an individual, agency, or government.

**Team:** Nadya Comeau, Library & Social Media Coordinator; Sue White, Volunteer Program; Jenna Brodersen, Community Learning Program Project lead; Juli Ohsada and Amelia Ack, Research Assistants; Emma Ronayne, Women and Gender Equity Health Project Lead

### 1. Bruce Parisian Library (BPL)



The Bruce Parisian Library is the only public lending library in a Friendship Centre in Canada and the hosts the largest collection of Indigenous created and related content on Vancouver Island. Our catalogue is searchable online, and we offer a wide array of complimentary programs, from books clubs, writing workshops, author reads and family days. Membership is \$1.

#### a) TD Ready Challenge Winner

The library applied for the TD Ready Challenge back in August 2021 and excitedly, we won funding for the library! As the libraries first significant grant we have been able to provide wonderful programs for school-aged children. Here is a list of just some of the large events and programs the BPL has provided during this fiscal year:

- [June's Grand Reopening of the BPL including staff appreciation;](#)
- [Supporting the Back-to-School Picnic by providing 70 bags of pre-school Indigenous books;](#)
- [September Family Day which included local authors, drum-making, children's activities, local partners, VNFC garden, music, food, prizes and more;](#)
- [VNFC's first Open Mic Night was hosting in October 2022, with our second in February 2023;](#)
- [A Living Library event which provided community with an opportunity to listen to eleven in person Story Tellers, Cultural Practitioners and most importantly, Elders;](#)
- [Inuit Throat Singing workshop with the local Inuit and a wonderful performance held at Camosun Lansdowne Campus, partnered with Camosun's Indigenous Literature Team;](#)
- [Team Building for our own teams including Culture and Elders and Youth Team;](#)
- [Providing a monthly programming to the LGBTQ2S+ Youth Drop In including the Snotty Nose Rez Kids coordination for the Two-Spirit Gathering;](#)
- [Providing five local schools with significant amounts of brand-new Indigenous books; and](#)
- [Providing Indigenous circles and teachings to local partners and community.](#)



**b) Oral History Project**



Our library partnered with Ry Moran, Associate University Librarian – Reconciliation at UVic, on a Story Gathering Project during the summer of 2021. The library is excited to have secured funding through the First Peoples Cultural Council as well as TD Bank. Meaning the project is back in the works for 2023.

The project, “We are Speaking” will support Indigenous language speakers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers and others with opportunities to share their stories and what they believe defines sense of place and belonging. Indigenous knowledge has been oral for centuries; teachings are passed down and held through family lineage, through communities, through seasons and beyond. In recognition of this vital way of knowing, the library is excited to continue its work in Oral History. This project is an effort to extend opportunity to community members wishing to document their stories.

**c) Volunteer Library Circle**

Our monthly Library Circles began in May 2021 with this work moving into 2023. The purpose is to create a space where the library staff can: (1) connect with library volunteers, (2) support the volunteers through cultural teachings and dialogue to allow for better understandings and (3) continue to learn about Reconciliation in a safe environment. The ongoing discussions have been informative and feedback from the group, positive. The library circles continue to be a wonderful resource and reconciliation gathering for people who serve their time for community.

**d) Story Time**



Story Time has been a weekly program where library volunteers read to XaXe Stelitkel Daycare children. With Covid 19 restrictions, this program was postponed until March 2022 and will continue throughout 2023.

With our strong partnership with Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL), the BPL has partnered to support the VNFC Story Time by producing training workshops as well as implement a more structured and diverse story time for the children. We currently have four volunteers who attend on a monthly schedule, along with one GVPL staff member. With new volunteers and structure, storytimes now bring song, dance, puppets, and activities to VNFC children.



### e) Urban Indigenous Knowledge Transfer Project

This is a new project hosted through the library and aims to recognize the importance of ceremony with knowledge transfer and create space where knowledge can be honoured and acknowledged. The objectives of this project include creating opportunities where knowledge for and about urban Indigenous people is shared in a culturally and contextually respectful and relevant manner to the greater community, dismantle barriers for urban Indigenous works of knowledge to be shared, and host urban ceremonies to celebrate diverse forms of Indigenous knowledge while honouring and respecting traditional knowledge and cultural practices. We hope to create and deliver many innovative spaces for knowledge sharing. The first is scheduled for June 2023.

## 2. Community Learning Program



The Community Learning Program (CLP) supports reconciliation through Indigenous-led, community-based learning and is a holistic learning experience that offers an opportunity for all community to learn together in a collaborative and experiential way. The Community Learning Program is creating a new pathway in community reconciliation. Between March 2022-December 2022 over 100 community members graduated. We had a program celebration December 1 and invited graduates and the families. More than 100 people came and it was an amazing night. We hope to double our stats in 2023 and hope to hire a full-time program manager who will work on an expansion plan for the program.

### a) Volunteer Learning Program

The Volunteer Program had a soft launch in August 2021. Development was based on a Needs Assessment conducted in 2020-21 that included conversations with other Indigenous service providers to understand some of their successes and challenges with volunteers. The assessment helped us to understand that our volunteers need a baseline of information about Indigenous peoples, so they are prepared to respectfully and safely share spaces with Indigenous community members. Also, that it is equally important the volunteer benefit from the experience as much as VNFC. So, we are taking a measured approach to growth and focusing on the quality of relationship we build with volunteers. We are also working to complete a Volunteer Program Manual which lines out all processes and procedures for volunteers. We will plan a formal launch of the program once the new CLP Manager is in place, as well as the manual and data system (see below), tentatively fall 2023, funding pending.

### b) Community Soup Lunch

VNFC has hosted Community Soup Lunch on Fridays between 12-1 in the Gym for many years. The center has always extended its invitation to anyone who's looking for a hot and delicious meal. With the development of the CLP and Volunteer Program, the team created its own community of volunteers through relationship building and partnerships. The weekly Community Soup Lunch program is now completely delivered with the support of twenty volunteers each week and is currently hosted and managed through the CLP.

### c) Data Management Project

We are in development with a locally owned business to create a custom database for tracking CLP participants and other volunteers. It should be complete in May 2023. We are also working with UVic Public Admin on an evaluation framework for CLP that will help us track our progress long-term. We hope this framework will prove applicable to other programs on the team, and perhaps in other departments of VNFC as well.

### 3. Art of Reconciliation Project



The Art of Reconciliation is a program for Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people aged 18-29 to help them explore how they feel about reconciliation. Participants are invited to create artwork based on their own personal perspectives of what Reconciliation means to them. The art making process follows a series of preparatory workshops to help them explore the theme of Reconciliation while being supported therapeutically by an Art Therapist. Participant's final artwork and their artist statements are then presented in a public exhibition bringing the broader community into the Reconciliation dialogue.

Cohort 3 is currently running with 14 participants in partnership with Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. The Exhibition is scheduled for Friday, March 10, at CHRC, and will include art pieces from the previous cohorts as well as interactive art stations, presentations from the stage, and refreshments.

### 4. Women & Gender Equity Health Project



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

The VNFC launched the Women and Gender Equality Health Project late 2022. The project first focused on a partnership with Island Health

but has expanded to include new partners like the Primary Care Network and others providing healthcare in the South Vancouver Island region. There are 2 components to this project.

The first component is to design and deliver an Indigenous cultural competency training for healthcare workers in the region. The advisory committee will guide development and include an Elder and Young Adult. The curriculum is under development and pilot sessions are expected summer 2023.

The second component focuses on empowering Indigenous people to better navigate the current healthcare system, including experiences of racism, and equipping them with the knowledge to advocate for themselves or loved ones. This work will include an information campaign to the Indigenous community at large aimed at increasing people's awareness of systems, roles and responsibilities of the 3 health authorities functioning in this region, as well as information on complaints procedures. This work will also include a women's empowerment circle where we will work directly with those experiencing ongoing healthcare needs to provide information, cultural and counselling support, and assistance with navigating the complex system of healthcare. Women tend to oversee healthcare within a family so their experiences directly impact the members of their family.

### 5. Health Canada Train-the-Trainer



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

We were notified in December 2022 of funds approved for a train-the-trainer initiative focused on increasing the number of people who can facilitate the WAGE Health Project healthcare

practitioners' cultural safety curriculum in development (see above). We will start by gathering community advisors to help us better understand how we move people into this challenging space of work and what types of training would support success for them. From we will develop custom curriculum. While training will focus on the health curriculum, we also hope it cultivates a pool of people also be interested in facilitating the Community Learning Program.

### 6. Leadership Tables

Our Team works with several leadership tables in a variety of capacities to explore what coordinated urban Indigenous leadership could look like with the long-term goal of creating better outcomes for Indigenous peoples in urban areas.

**a. Greater Victoria Urban Indigenous Community Leadership Table**

The Leadership Table formed in August 2020 as a response to *BC's Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the Action Plan and co-created 2 submissions, a "Statement to MIRR regarding the Inaugural Action Plan for *BC's Declaration Act*", and "Response to MIRR's Consultative Draft Action Plan for *BC's Declaration Act*". During this work it became evident that an ongoing space for dialogue was needed for the urban Indigenous community.



The Leadership Table is now working to grow and nurture a broader conversation with the 17,000 Indigenous people living across the region. We are hosting safe spaces so we can learn who are community members are, where they come from, and why they choose to be here. Knowing our community and providing members an opportunity to identify themselves and learn about this work is the first step in understanding how UNDRIP legislation and corresponding Action Plans can involve and positively impacts urban peoples in greater Victoria. The Leadership Table is open to new members.

**b. Provincial Urban Indigenous Leadership**

VNFC was asked by MIRR to assist with hosting an initial dialogue of provincial urban Indigenous community leaders about organizing. This project is being advised by our local Leadership Table (see above). A virtual Provincial Urban Indigenous Leadership Gathering is scheduled for February 22, 2023, and a well-attended information session about the event was hosted December 1, 2022. We hope to gather 75 leaders for this day long discussion. For more info: [www.urbanvoices.ca](http://www.urbanvoices.ca).

**c. Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD) Steering Committee**



This committee is on break until April 2023 but the website remains active, [www.TheDialogueVictoria.ca](http://www.TheDialogueVictoria.ca)

The VNFC acts as the secretariat of the VURD Steering Committee and associated projects. The Steering Committee has expanded to include the Oak Bay Council with the next meeting scheduled for April 2023. Work continues to focus on engaging with community to education and encourage participation in reconciliation activities, enabling networking and connections within community, and bolstering participation of young adults.

VURD continues to encourage grassroots participation along with the continued updates to the dialogue website that holds documents on how agencies, governments and citizen groups have come together between 2018-2022 at three separate gatherings to build relationships and develop the Reconciliation Blueprint. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and other circumstances, there have not been any gatherings since Feb 2020, but we are hoping this will start happening again soon.

# Early Childhood Development Team 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by  
Rebecca Mabee, BSW  
Aboriginal Early Education & Nutritional Programs Coordinator  
April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

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## **ECD STAFF:**

Rebecca Mabee  
Delwyn Preston  
Mandy Griffiths

Program Manager  
Family Support Worker  
Family Support worker

## **CAPC STAFF:**

Aiden Farrow

CAPC/Family Support  
Lactation Consultant

## **OUTSIDE AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICE and/or FUNDING TO ECD:**

**We are very grateful for the support that we receive from everyone listed below**

Island Health Public Health Nurses and Dental  
Cobs Bakery  
Mustard Seed  
Coats for Kids  
Farmers Market Program  
Good Food Box  
MCFD  
Food Share Network

BC Transit  
Community Council  
1000 x5 books  
BCPOP  
Nesting Doula Collective  
FNHA Maternal  
Child and Family Health and SD61

## **Early Childhood Development Department**

**Mission:** To provide Indigenous families and community with the opportunity to confront the challenges and celebrate the joys of parenting, by providing a range of accessible, affordable programming for young children (0-6years) and their families in a secure comfortable, culturally supportive and respectful environment.

**ECD Mandate:** We celebrate children and families by creating family development programs that help families nurture healthy children. We also support an inclusive environment where all families are respected and valued for their diversity.



### **ECD Goals:**

- To provide urban Indigenous parents/caregivers with access to information and resources pertaining to pregnancy, birth, infancy, parenting, FASD prevention, and available resources to support families in their efforts to raise healthy children.
- To educate Aboriginal parents, parents-to-be, foster parents and adoptive parents regarding healthy development of the whole child including physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health.
- To nurture and promote early development of Aboriginal children in a safe, culturally relevant and appropriate environment.
- To build partnerships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

community children and family resources.

### **Slaheena Perinatal Support Program:**

It has been shown that the perinatal education and support that expectant parents receive, coupled with the first six years of life, can make a huge difference in the child's mental, emotional, and physical development.

Slaheena means ***"little feet"*** and is from the Coast Salish Sencoten language. The Sencoten language spells it as SXXINE.

Slaheena Mandate: ***"to promote healthy practices while facilitating the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies in our urban Indigenous community."***



## ECD this year

Offering 208 groups this year to 131 parents and children.

We are happy to be able to run programming again. This has been the year of creativity. The moms coming to programming are extremely artistic and creative. We as staff walk

along side of the families in their parenting journey. We have discussions on parenting, child development, navigating systems, life experience, childcare, grief, loss, and joys. It has been a great year.

This year the families:

- Made moccasins.
- Made Ribbon skirts.
- Made beaded Christmas bulbs.
- Made woven blankets.
- Made dolls with Shona.
- Made woven cedar hats.

Families learned Infant massage, Infant physiotherapy and Infant first aid. We all learned the benefits of Devil's club from Elder Jean Smith. We cooked and ate together and explored our local Swan Lake on a field trip.





### Courses, Meetings and Conferences attended by Staff

- Kids Action Training
- Psychological First Aid Training
- Devils Club Workshop
- Assist
- CAPC regional Training
- Devils Club Workshop
- Pregnancy after Loss
- Post Partum Doula Training
- Doula Training





## School Based counsellor at Quadra Elementary

### **Staff- Sierra Lewis**

During my time at Quadra Elementary School, I've participated in social emotional learning groups, set up one on one check in for students, connected parents with family community recourses, set students up with tutoring, connected families with private assessments, participated in the first Quadra hockey team, organized large Indigenous cultural night and taught students about cultural traditions.

**Thank You.**



# Young Warriors

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Mabee, Program Manager

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## Staff

Madeleine Begin	Lead Facilitator
William Smith	Senior Facilitator
Jean Smith	Program Elder

Young Warriors is a youth empowerment program for youth ages 7-12.  
In the Young Warrior program, topics include:

- Feelings: How to cope with strong feelings, communicating different and complex feelings, different way to describe how you might be feeling, respecting our own and other people's feelings, how to practice empathy.
- Bullying: Types of bullying, why someone might bully another person, how to end bullying by being inclusive, using empathy and standing up to bullying in a positive way.
- Relationships & Boundaries: What types of relationships we have with the different people in our lives, what makes a healthy or unhealthy relationship, types of boundaries, how to respect other peoples' boundaries and express our own.
- Health and Wellness: The Medicine Wheel teachings on finding balance on our lives, Things we do to take care of ourselves and live a balanced life (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually).
- Culture: Learning about the Devil's Club plant history and medicinal properties, creating beaded necklaces with the wood (activity lead by an elder), and learning about/creating medicine bags (activity lead by knowledge keeper).
- An art Therapy component is involved for some of the topics.



## Young Warriors this Year

Young Warriors had 53 participants during this reporting period. We provided the main program, a follow up program called Connections, summer camps and Monday drop in. Young Warriors continued to be offered through zoom to promote attendance and alleviate some of the stress for parents of getting their children to the centre. In order to promote deeper connection, we offered a Monday afternoon, in person, drop in. During the summer we ran a mini summer camp with 5-7 participants for six of the weeks. We were able to take the participants to locations they might not get a chance to visit, such as Malahat Skywalk and Wild Play. We look forward to expanding the program in the coming year.

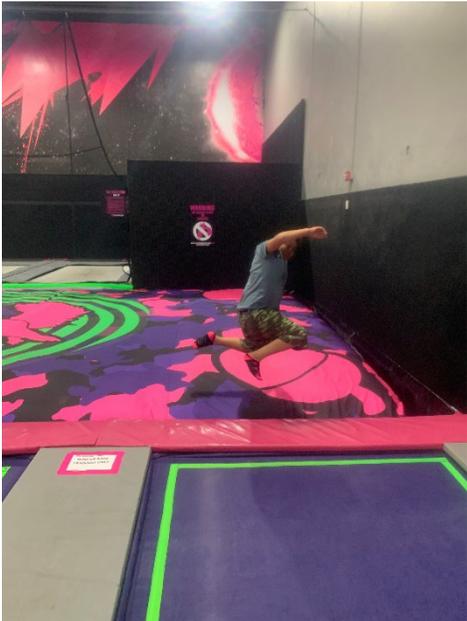
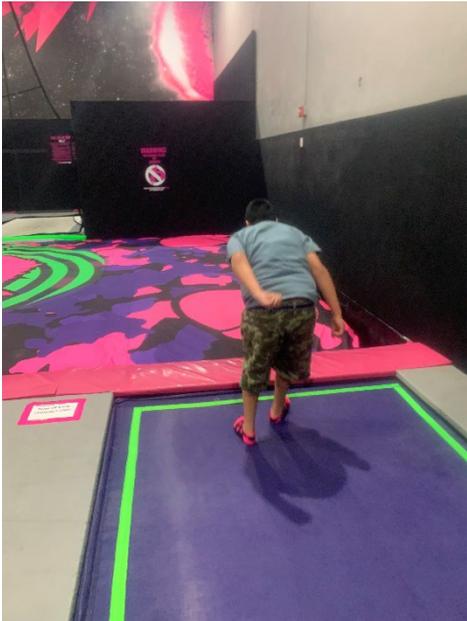


### Quotes from participants:

- I enjoyed learning about the medicine wheel and watching the hoop dancer video.
- I like all the stories; I enjoyed listening to them.
- I look forward to the Young Warrior days.
- Thank you for allowing people from far away to attend the program we don't have anything like this in my community. I wish this program lasted longer.
- I have a lot of fun in this program.
- I wish Young Warriors was every day.
- My favourite part of the program was the cultural activities.
- I liked getting to talk about my day.
- I don't want the program to end can we still meet on zoom.
- My favorite part was doing all of the activities.
- I love getting the snacks every week.
- I will be a ten out of ten every day because I like Young Warriors.
- My favorite part was doing all of the activities like the necklace and medicine bags.
- The biggest lesson I learned was how to open up.
- Question: What are you going to miss the most about Young Warriors?
- "I'm going to miss the sharing circle because I like hearing how they feel."
- From the elder of the program "The work that you do with the youth in this program is invaluable. It is amazing to see such good work being done for our community."

**Young Warriors would like to thank the following for funding:**

- Bank of Nova Scotia
- Civil Forfeiture
- Canadian Women’s Foundation



# Family Services Team 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by  
Brenda Freeman; Family Services Team Leader

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The Family Services Team (FST) would like to first acknowledge and express their appreciation for the generosity of living and working on the Traditional Territory of the Esquimalt, Songhees, Saanich and the other 10 Nations with respect for learning and raise their families on.

Family Service Team believes in assisting Native Families or person through a balanced approach by empowering them with their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing journey.

## Family Services Team:

Brenda Freeman, BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team  
Vacant, Social Worker  
Vacant, Social Worker  
Trina Minshall, Family Support Worker  
Vacant, Family Support Worker

### Staff Leaving:

Julie Bell. Social Worker who started the FST on October 30, 2017. Julie Bell taken on the position with Awakening the Woman Warrior Within.

### Practicum Student:

Navkiran Kaur Student from University of Victoria; School of Social Work from May 4 to July 22, 2022

### Volunteering:

- Brenda Freeman BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team - Since June/2021 is the Community Co-Chair for the Great Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee. **(Pictures down below of activities that was I attended)**
- Brenda Freeman, BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team – Since March/2022 has sat in on the Family Support Workers Network Meetings/Mental Health Network
- Trina Minshall, Social Worker - Is involved in Occupational Health and Safety (OSH)

## Community Involvement:

We as The Family Services Team continue to attend Workshops, Conference, and meet weekly to discuss cases to support each other in a holistic perspective. And we take advantage of many training opportunities that are provides in the community by other agencies.

### Guest Speakers/Workshops/Conferences/COVID.

- May 2 and 3, 2022 - **Mental Health First Aid Training.** all staff attended.

- May 5, 2022 – **Our Womxn are Sacred Walk**. Practice Student and one staff attend.
- May 17, 2022 – **Child and Family Service Legislative Reform Engagement Session**. Through the Federation of Community Social Services of BC/ The Ministry of Children and Family Development one staff attended.
- May 16, 2022 – **Workshop: Strengthening Indigenous Legal Authority Over Child Welfare**, Having every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays at 10:00am or 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays at 2:00pm. All Family Service Team staff. By Parent Support Services Society of BC.
- May 18, 2022 – **MCFD CRSP**: one staff attended.
- May 19 & 26, 2022 – **Financial Literacy Workshop**: couple of staff have attend.
- May 24, 2022 - Honoring **VNFC Elders and Seniors**. all staff included practicum student attended.
- June 9, 2022 – **Federation of Community Social Services of BC**, one staff attended.
- June 21, 2022- **Nation First Nation Day**- a few staff attended.
- June 23, 2022 - **VNFC Really Big Bingo**: all staff included practicum student attended.
- July 8, 2022 – **Justice Access Centre**; did a presentation of Family Justice Counsellor.
- July 19, 2022 – **The Supreme court of Canada’s Extreme Intoxication Decisions**: one staff attend.
- July 22 to 26, 2022 - **NAFC AGM** and Gala- one staff attended.
- August 7, 2022- **Move out of FST Department**:
- August 15 - **RCY info session**: few staff have attend.
- September 6, 2022 - **VNFC intake**; only on Wednesday
- September 16, 2022 – **Native Courtworker & Counselling Association of BC**: Native Courtworker for Victoria did a present for FST and Aboriginal Infant Development Programs.
- September 21, 2022 – **Wild About Plants** – 3 staff attended.
- September 27. 2022 – **Safetalk Training**- 4 Staff attended
- Oct. 17, 2022 – **Free Legal Workshop**, 1 staff attended.
- October 19 and 20, 2022- **Social Justice & Sustainability** (The Federation of Community Social Services of BC; one staff attended.
- November 7, 2022 – Food Safe Leve I Training: 1 staff attended.
- November 8, 18, & Dec. 13, 2022 – **Principled Engagement with Indigenous People**: one staff attended.
- Nov. 10, 2022- **Drop-in Indigenous Child Welfare Circle**, one only staff attended.
- November 22, 2022 – **Social Work Oversight Engagement**; Few staff attended.
- Justice Access Centre
- Nov. 20, 2022 - **Federation Conference & GM**: one staff attended.
- Dec. 15, 2022 - **VNFC’s Elder and Senior Holiday Celebration**. All staff attended.
- Dec. 19, 2022- **Drop-in Indigenous, Metis and Inuit Child Welfare Circle**
- Jan. 12, 2023 - **Gender Based Violence Final Community Gathering**: 1 staff attended.
- Jan. 16 & 17, 2023 – **Indigenous Focused Psychological First Aid**: all staff attended.
- Feb. 2, 2023 – **Sidney Expo**: 1 staff Attended.

#### Future: Guest Speakers/Webinars/Seminars/Conferences

- Trauma Care informed and Therapeutic Process – April 12 to 13.

- ASIST Training
- Justice Access Centre for a tour their centre
- MCFD have a Team Meeting by introduction each other rolls at VNFC.
- Native Courtworker and Family Law lawyer presentation
- 1Up Victoria Single Parenting Resource Centre.
- Metis Local on site.
- More Team Building

#### Administrative:

1. Weekly Team Meetings
2. Team Leader and individual FST Staff debriefing when a difficult situation is presented.
3. File Reviews: Sit with individual FST workers and discuss about their client's files.
4. Having at least one Team Building workshop per month.

#### Family Services Team Goals:

The Family Services Team is mandated to advocate and provide supports for Urban First Nation Families or individual who are involved with the Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD). Our goal and dreams are to have First Nation Children stay out of care of MCFD and/or return to their families and communities.

Family Services Team is developing a positive working relationship with other departments and organization in the community of Greater Victoria.

#### Family Services Team staff will be constructive:

- With check-ins with clients using COVID safety protocol: Having ongoing check-ins with clients at least once a week with home visit, Text, Telephone calls and office visits for clients/Professionals.
- Will develop, implement and complete of an individual risk reduction plan.
- The approach is holistic and culturally sensitive.
- Multi-disciplinary Team working to improve children, family and community identity and wellness.
- Will support with skill development, education, mentorship, and cultural continuity.
- Will assist in parenting skills, communication skills, budgeting, life skills, nutrition, housing, and social assistance.
- And provide traditional and cultural values as related to individual(s) life: Emotional Support. Spiritual and Culturally

#### Services we provide: Case management:

- Clients File Case: Case Note, Applications, Legal Documents, Referrals, Email/Text Messages. Point of Services,
- Attending case conferences, family case planning conference meeting with lawyers, court, School funding, and mediation
- Advocate; income assistance, lawyers, MCFD, schools, and mediation, and preparation for court.
- Help fill out forms with client: Status Application, Child Tax Credit, Court Documents, any other government related forms and getting written supporting letters and advocating.
- Connect with Resources: Legal Aid, MCFD, 60s scoop, court processes, and many more.
- Transportation: meetings, foodbank, court, RCMP/Police, MCFD appointments, Counselling, Treatment Centre's and Supervised with child (ren).

- Provide bus tickets and food cards (on need bases).

We are referring clients to internal and external Departments/Organization:

- Counselling: Addition Counselling, FNHA counsellors, Jordin’s Principals, and Youth Department.
- Health Support Workers, Homeless Support Worker, Group Session (Awakening the Woman Warrior Within & Awakening the Warrior Within), Career Employment and Education Resources, VNFC Housing.
- Parenting classes (ECD), 1Up Victoria Single Parenting Resource Centre and MCFD parenting in evening.
- Aboriginal Early Intervention Team: FASD, AIDP and ASCD
- Justice Access Centre and Parent Legal Centre Outreach MCFD.

Program Statistics:

The Family Service Team carries a case load from March/2022:

- 128 files with all: 50 **active** (new intakes or returning client), 38 **inactive** (Haven’t heard from their clients over a 3 Month) and 40 **closing files** (Haven’t had contact within 6 months and closing letter is sent)

**Overall Achievements with clients**

Supports In:	Amount Success:	Supports In:	Amount Success:
Visit: kids in MCFD Care	9	Child return: Parent(s)/Family	4
Child staying at Home	15	MCFD (closing)	6
Detox/ in and complete Treatment	10	Found Housing	6
Documents: legal, Indian Stats, PWD, Housing:	25	Education/Employment	3
Custody:	3		

May 5, 2022 – Our Womxn are Sacred Walk



June 23, 2022, VNFC Really Big Bingo



July 22, 2022 - NAFC AGM and Gala:

This picture is before the youth arrived



And this picture is after they arrived.



March 2, 2023: Sidney Employment Expo



## Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC)

April 30, 2022: AHAVI Celebration



Uptown Multicultural Festival on July 9, 2022



Menorah Lighting: Dec. 18, 2022

DAC Dance Party: February 20, 2023



**Closing Statement:** Family Service Team will continue assisting First Nation Families through a balanced approach by empowering them with their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing journey. Family Service Team take advantage of many self care opportunities that are provide in the community by other agencies and/or VNFC.



## VNFC Hamper Program 2022 - 2023



The Hamper Program continues to support over 1200 individuals, families, Elders, tenants at Siem Le Lum and Fernwood, and those sheltering in Hotels on a bi-weekly basis. We offer hamper deliveries, pickups, and recently integrated emergency hampers for those who are in immediate need.



### STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

**Johnathan Smith, Hamper Program Assistant (February 14, 2022- Current)**

**Shauna**

**Duke**

**Ben**

### STATS

**Total Hampers: 8500**

**Total People Supported: 1200**

From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 the Hamper Program has sent out 8500 food hampers supporting 1200 people. The hampers are given out twice a month for pickup and delivery.

In our hampers we provide one canned good (meat, Chef Boyardee etc.), one canned vegetable, also portioned bulk items like flour, oats, trail mix, sugar and coffee, Tilly's rice or soup and assorted snacks. We include frozen meat like ground beef or pork or sausages. We include a bag of fresh vegetables and bread. We also have many community members who do not have access to basic cook appliances, so have a no cook hamper. Our partners who help provide us with supplies are Zambris restaurant who provides tomato sauce, Tilly's Galley provides soup and rice mixes, Island West Produce and Mustard Seed who provide us with fresh produce, Little Jam Stand provide us with jams and other canned sauces, Rainbow Kitchen and Cob's bread donates bread and other baked goods. We provide work experience for students and volunteers who want to help out.



VNFC is working diligently to strengthen food security for the community in a post pandemic world.

**THANK YOU to all those who have provided financial support to our program.**

**THANK YOU to all those who have provided foods supplies to our program.**

# Wellness and Health 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

*Respectfully Submitted by  
Grey Showler, Director of Wellness and Health Services  
March 31, 2022 – April 1, 2023*



## Current Staff

Grey Showler	Director of Wellness and Health Services
Christina Kante	Wellness Team Manager
Michele Nault Mortimer	VNFC Primary Care Network Indigenous Lead
Isobel Dick	Indigenous Wellness Provider Health Support
Scott Ireson	Health Support Worker
Kelsey Sutton	Mental Health and Substance Use Support Worker
Julie Parrell	Garden Team Lead
Raelynn Proudlove	Garden Support
Kaleih Lafleur	Medical Office Assistant
Dr. Kate Elliot	Family Physician
Danielle Linton	Nurse Practitioner
Tarah Reece	Nurse Practitioner
Liz Lofts	Nurse Practitioner

## Previous Staff (2022/23)

Sky Bellefluer	Sage Birley	Dena McDonald
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## Overview

The VNFC Wellness and Health Services is a newly created department bringing together mental health and substance use services, health supports, Primary Care Network (PCN) Indigenous Wellness Providers (IWP), the garden team, and primary care. We brought these teams together with the goal of providing holistic, integrated care for our community members



with the ability to access a range of Indigenous and Western supports through an “any door is the right door” philosophy. Our team builds on the success of existing VNFC programs with the addition of new team members through the PCN and newly awarded Island Health contracts. We seek to be a place where community feels supported in their health and wellness journey.

## A growing team in 2022/23 ...

- The VNFC partnered with the Victoria and Western Primary Care Networks to enhance access to primary care services and health supports for Indigenous community across the region. This partnership includes 2 physicians, 2 nurse practitioners, and 2 registered nurses to be added over the next 2 years to the existing primary care team. One physician and one NP were added this year have attached 600 new patients.
- As part of the PCN partnership, VNFC has created a new PCN Indigenous Lead position filled by Michele Nault Mortimer who will provide leadership to a newly created team of 8 Indigenous Wellness Providers to be hired starting April 2023.
- Funding was secured to renovate the VNFC to add 3 new dedicated exam rooms for providing primary care and other Wellness and Health services.
- Funding was secured to build a new health care centre off-site to accommodate the growth in Wellness and Health Services.
- VNFC added the position of Director of Wellness and Health services to support the growth and ongoing delivery of health services. Grey Showler was hired to fill this position in June 2022.
- Funding was secured to add a new Registered Clinical Counselor position to the Mental Health and Substance Use services, which will be starting in May 2023.
- Funding was secured to create a new permanent Garden Team Lead position and to offer a range of innovative programs focused on traditional medicines and food security.

## Partners

Island Health	Pacheedaht First Nation	Canadian Red Cross
Victoria Divisions of Family Practice	Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council	Aboriginal Housing Management Association
Esquimalt First Nation	Pacific Rim College	Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society
Songhees First Nation	West Coast College of Massage Therapy	First Nations Health Authority
Scia'new First Nation	Victoria Cool Aid Society	Can-Assist

## Program Summaries and Highlights

### *Complex Care Housing*

Through a partnership between the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and the Aboriginal Housing Management Association, VNFC has been selected to open a new Indigenous supported housing project. The funding, called Complex Care Housing, will provide a long-term home for 10 Indigenous community members who are homeless and living with challenges like mental



health and/or substance use. The housing will provide health, mental health, cultural and daily living supports to help residents heal and connect with community. Site selection is underway with the goal of having the first residents in their new homes in 2023/24.

### *Health Support and Wellness Services*

Our Health Support team provides one-to-one and group supports, group health education and programming, and runs the popular Wellness Room. Community members are supported on their journey through the health care system with one-to-one advocacy, case management, and accompaniment. This year our team also offered a range of educational activities like Lunch and Learns on living with arthritis and navigating FNHA benefits. We hosted a 6-week Honour Your Health Challenge with funding from ISPARC. We partnered with Tsow-Tun Le Lum to offer Day School compensation application and cultural supports. In the Wellness Room community members access free massage, acupuncture, herbal therapy, nutritional consultations, and foot care.

### *Indigenous Wellness Providers*



The IWP are a new team funded through the Victoria PCN to provide Indigenous community with support in their journey accessing health care. IWP will provide individualized supports to Indigenous patients and families residing within the Victoria PCN and the 5 First Nations served by VNFC primary care services. IWP will support clients to access health and social services, providing systems navigation and case management, while working to support clients to build their own capacity where possible. IWP will provide accompaniment to medical appointments and help bridge gaps between primary care and specialized medical services. As importantly, they will support clients to access Indigenous medicine and cultural supports. They will also offer health related education programming including self-management for chronic conditions such as arthritis and chronic pain.

Michele Nault Mortimer was hired in November 2022 to lead the team and provide leadership within the PCN. The first 4 IWP will be hired and start providing service in April, 2023. Michele co-chairs the Indigenous Collaborative providing advisory to the Victoria and Western PCNs and has also supported the development of a new cultural safety training for health care providers in the area.

### *Mental Health and Substance Use*

VNFC MHSU services provide individual and group supports for community seeking to improve their health and make changes to their substance use. MHSU service include one-to-one supports and referrals to treatment and other substance use programs. Importantly, our MHSU services also include cultural pathways to healing and this year offered a range of activities like drum making and beading that provide people struggling with substance use a path to connect with their traditions and community.

- Offered group programming including Wellbriety, Circle of Support, Grief Support Circle, and Wellness in the Garden
- Organized Safe Talk Training for 50 people and Mental Health First Aid for 30 participants
- Provided indigenous-focused Psychological First Aid Training in partnership with Red Cross for 40 staff

Partnership with Law Centre to provide legal services at VNFC serving 22 people  
*Garden*

The VNFC Garden grows food and traditional medicines to share with community while also offering events and programs for community to connect with the land and each other. The Garden also supports other VNFC programs by providing access to traditional medicines and nutritious foods grown in the VNFC Garden.

- Attended Project Reconnect and provided medicines to 45 people and smudging for 40+
- Provided smudging and teachings about traditional medicines for over 100 staff and community members at the Youth 2Spirit Gathering, Spring Break Camp and Community smudge events

*Primary Care*

The VNFC offers primary care to Indigenous community on and off reserve on the South Island. Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and family physicians (FP) provide longitudinal, culturally safe care from the VNFC and on outreach at Esquimalt, Songhees, Scia’new, and Pacheedaht First Nations. This year, our primary care team added a new FP and NP and attached over 600 new patients to a provider. VNFC is now the primary care home for over 1,200 Indigenous community members.



VNFC also received new funding to support primary care, allowing us to add our own Medical Office Assistant (MOA) and purchase new equipment for our clinic. In 2024, VNFC will upgrade and expand the clinical space at the VNFC as well as adding new dedicated health care centre close by the VNFC to accommodate our growing team and number of patients.

**Statistics**

- 600 new patients attached to primary care
- 1200 patients total attached to an NP or FP at VNFC
- 1,553 Wellness Clinic appointments accessed
- 32 individuals accessed 1-1 substance use support
- 24 individuals accessed 1-1 Health Support
- 318 people participated in Garden Workshops and events



# Indigenous Culture and Traditions

Respectfully Submitted By: *Lisa Mercure*  
Reporting Period: April 2022 – March 2023

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## Indigenous Culture and Traditions (ICT) Team

**ICT Team Lead:** Lisa Mercure (Mikisew Nîhîyaw, Dëne Sųłíné and wemistikôsiw/French)

**Elder Support:** Angie Haizimsque (Nisga'a)

**Language Coordinator:** Peter Underwood (WŚÁNEĆ- Tsawout and Norwegian)

**Language Support:** Dale Whitford (Metis Cree)

**Culture Support:** Ash Murphy (WŚÁNEĆ & Spences Bridge)

The ICT program was developed in 2018 through engaging local Indigenous Elders and founding members who continue to guide responsive programming. Through fundraising, we secured positions to support Elders and Seniors, develop the Urban Indigenous Language Hub and now the Elders lead cultural workshops. We host 52 diverse programs monthly for Elders and Seniors; Language reclamation for those of that language family; and programming where everyone is welcome.

## Indigenous Elders and Senior Employees

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre is Honored to be connected and supported by a team of 32 Indigenous Elders and Seniors who are casual employees and Advisors, reclaiming their Traditional role being at the centre of our VNFC family. This past year they contributed over 1,000 hours connecting directly with community. They host workshops, provide Advisory support developing programs, hold Healing Circles, transfer Cultural knowledge, lead the Urban Indigenous Language Hub as Speakers, Seniors and host community programs open to all. Thank you for all your encouragement, support, and guidance.

This work is incredibly precious, as we have a short time with the Elders and Seniors connected to VNFC. We experienced a high number of losses this year, of loved ones who have raised up and mentored so many in community. During the pandemic, many were unable to hold funeral or community gatherings. We've encouraged our team and Elders to include wellness in many ways, learning tools from First Nation Health Authority and Tsow Tun Lelum Helping House.

Currently, no core funding exists for Indigenous Elders, outside of one federal annual \$25,000 grant. We fundraise through our Elder & Seniors craft cupboard year-round, host Silent Auctions 1-2 times yearly. We are proud of all VNFC teams for including Elders within their programming, virtually on zoom since 2020, and now emerging and seen frequenting the halls. They are highly respected, loved and are truly at the centre of our organization.

## Highlights this Year:

**Tipi Teachings** - We introduced “Tipi Teachings: Stories and Songs” including diverse Indigenous Elders, Fluent Speakers and Cultural Practitioners who shared Stories and Songs at three events.

- [National Indigenous Peoples’ Day at Royal Roads](#) June 21
- [Songhees Nation’s South Island Powwow](#) on September 30<sup>th</sup> National Day of Truth and Reconciliation
- Camosun Indigenous Studies (IST) students Tipi Raising

**Indigenous Book Circle** – We hosted two virtual Book Circles with Indigenous Authors, including: Richard Van Camp ‘[Gather: the Joy of Storytelling](#)’ and Shelagh Rogers ‘[Embers: One Ojibway’s Meditations](#)’ written by the talented late Richard Wagamese.

**Elders & Seniors Teas** – Elders and Seniors were able to socialize with one another on zoom online or calling in, and slowly moved to small gatherings at VNFC. We hosted luncheons with tea to visit together, plan outings and programs.

**Urban Indigenous Language Hub** - We held two Language Advisory gatherings to bring the cohorts together to help the six Indigenous Language groups to share what each cohort is working on.

**Nihiyaw (Cree)** two distinct Nêhiyawêwin classes: Y dialect and another with TH/Y dialects 4 fluent speakers, 2 helpers hosted seasonal sessions Tuesday evenings and an ongoing Y dialect class Saturdays, along with seasonal outings and gatherings.

**Sayisi Dene** – 1 speaker, 1 helper created learning tools, and translation curriculum.

**Dakota Sioux** – 1 speaker, 2 helpers worked on translating books, Teachings, and games.

**Nuu-chah-nulth** – 3 fluent speakers, 1 helper supporting Speakers teaching basic language.

**Anishinaabe** – 3 helpers leading basic language classes and two potluck gatherings. This cohort used to meet in rooms at Camosun and UVic and is now part of the Language Hub.

**Carrier** – 1 fluent speaker and 1 helper, creating resources and hosting classes.



*The weekly Anishinaabemowin language table, joined the Urban Indigenous Language Hub November 2022.*

**Embedding Language through Culture** – Speakers worked on translating cultural workshops across four distinct Languages, practicing the translations with their Helper and bringing it to the language cohorts to practice before hosting cultural workshops in language.

This work converged when our ICT team supported Speakers to host programming during the Youth teams LGBTQ2+ event. We created an immersive experience to include: sound, sight, taste, feeling, hearing the connection to land, culture, language and community. We included

Cedar trees, ferns and shrubs; draped tables with smoked elk hide, hung deer rawhide; displayed cultural tools from ulus, hide scrapers, rattles and [drums from diverse Nations](#): Quilautik (Inuit), Dunne-za (Beaver Dene), Coastal styles; *Video*: played in both rooms: [Adhòh Tr'ahshii – Hide Tanning](#) while Youth worked on Medicine Pouches. They watched us practice the words, and began to help the Speaker with translations and recordings. The rooms were filled with vibrant conversations and connecting (some for the first time) with community Elders.

**Cultural Workshops** – With support from the Culture position, we have hosted workshops with many teams, including Elders and local Indigenous Artisans. We hosted 2 Rattles & Songs, Drum Making, Wapos Rabbit Keychains, Medicine Pouches, and Cedar weaving.

**Food Security** – Our Elder Support assists with delivery of essential supplies and food hampers every two weeks.

**Indigenous Artisan Market & Directory** – We welcomed back the annual Indigenous Artisan Market in person this year, hosting 42 Artisans and Elders to sell their works of art. We're developing a contact list for teams to build upon, so far gathered info for 90 Artisans, 120 Suppliers, and 28 Facilitators.

**Wellness Workshops** – Our friends at Tsow Tun Lelum have supported our Elders and community to heal. We host weekly Qi Gong by zoom, and monthly Chair Yoga with a Dene facilitator. Active Elders includes bi-weekly outings and fieldtrips.

**Elder and Seniors Phone Chain** – We had support from a Camosun Practicum placement who was trained to run the weekly Phone Chain, for check-in's and provide updates on support available including the weekly hamper. This has helped everyone feel connected and loved.



Language Hub participants creating drums to learn traditional songs.

#### **Partners:**

**Camosun, Family Support Practicum**-mentored 3 practicum students to support programming and connecting directly with Elders. Engaged VNFC to host Tipi Teachings with our Speakers to host a bbq and cultural workshop on March 31 for the Indigenous Studies students.

**District of Saanich, Seniors Table**-helped to plan and co-host a virtual Elder and Seniors luncheon to meet friends from diverse cultures.

**Gardens of HCP**- VNFC was able to host the Language Advisory and Elders Winter Festivus at their location.

**HeartLake Farms**- We connected with the Equine Assisted Learning Program who hosted a few Indigenous Elders and community to participate in their horse healing programs.

**Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary** – welcomes our VNFC teams to utilize space for gatherings, and access to the Nature House and meeting spaces were given at no cost for the Language Cohorts.

**Royal Roads University** – monthly planning January to June for the annual National Indigenous Day activities, along with 19 local Indigenous agencies.

**Tsow Tun Le Lum Helping House** – the ICT team connects with the team when VNFC teams request cultural, counselling support for community at events that require cultural safety.

**URSA Creative** – Hosts Elder Tech Time monthly for Elders and Seniors by appointment.

**UVIC and UBC Department of Curriculum & Instruction**– VNFC assisted the research team, educators, Indigenous Elders, Cultural Practitioners and Indigenous Musicians and Educators to form an advisory to help plan a conference in February 2022, sharing Indigenous perspectives for Choral Music education, with VNFC providing ongoing advisory support seasonally.

**UVIC Dept of Geography** – worked with an Elder and Senior advisory to design a survey to assess how the pandemic has affected them and how VNFC can provide support.

**Q'opthut Sul'hween (Gathering of Elders) Society**- connecting with VNFC to coordinate Indigenous Elders to the Island Elders Gatherings monthly.

**June 21 - National Indigenous Peoples Day (NIPD)** The event was well attended over 2,000 participants (of which we had 645 learn about the Tipi Teachings).



**Events:** This year we introduced Tipi Teachings: Stories and Songs with local and diverse Language Speakers, Elders, Cultural Practitioners. It was a huge success, with dreams of becoming a larger Indigenous Storytelling Festival in years to come.

**September 30 - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR)** The ICT team with 22 volunteers hosted 'Tipi Teachings' which included Speakers sharing Traditional stories, songs in language. We were overwhelmed with the response from our community with over 18,000 participants. VNFC's Tipi Teachings was planned to run 10am to 5pm but was extended to 8pm in response to the crowds wanting to learn. Our language team hosted over 2,250 participants, with more taking time to acknowledge 50 fluent Speakers/Old Ones and Cultural Practitioners (2,300 participants)



## ICT Program – Team Roles

**Culture position** has helped us to have extra support to prepare cultural workshops for teams, and external requests, types of programs included: Artisan Contacts, Annual Artist Market, Knit and Craft Circle, Cedar weaving, Urban Powwow, Beading and Medicine Pouch

**Elder Support position** wraps around our Old Ones/Elders and Seniors. The regular programming included: Active Elders, Bingo, Indigenous Book Circle, Coffee w Guys, Elder Advisory, Elder Interviews, Fieldtrips, Elders Tea, Tech Time, Tea Bannock, Qi Gong, Phone Chain and Practicum Helper

**Language Hub Coordinator & Language Support** host the seven language cohorts and support each cohorts Helper(s) to translate and host language classes, outings, gatherings. The cohorts include: Anishinaabe, Nuu-Chah-Nulth, nehiyaw ᑭᓴᓴᓴᓴ (Cree) Y & Th Dialect, Carrier Nedut'en, Dene and Dakota. We bring together the cohorts 2-3 times annually for the Language Advisory.

**ICT Coordinator** provides overall coordination, hands on hosting programming to ensure our team is supported. Overall communications with internal and external partners. Maintains connections with our Elders and casual Elder and Senior employees and Advisory, connects with program teams who hire the Elders within programs, supports Elders to confirm any bookings and complete their payroll bi-weekly.

## Indigenous Culture & Traditions (ICT) Team statistics

We were able to continue programs hybrid in person and zoom. Overall 1,746 individuals participated in 25 types of programming and events this year. The total points of service 6,335. By year end we connected with 295 Elders and Seniors.

Overall statistics by program:

	# participants	points of service	male	Female	other	Elders	Youth	Indigenous	First Nation	Métis	Inuit	Other	volunteers	volunteer hours
Cultural Program	803	1839	109	313		118	67	271	34	59		19	59	227
Elder Program	816	3612	207	447	3	574	4	441	209	41	5	105	120	668
Language Program	127	884	22	63	4	35	12	100	81	13			12	219
	<b>1746</b>	<b>6335</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>1114</b>

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service with our Indigenous community and Elders/Old Ones and Seniors.

***Ninaskamon ... All of our Gratitude, Respect and Honour***



# INDIGENOUS SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ANNUAL REPORT

April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023



The Indigenous Speech Language Pathology program is a free, voluntary and family centered support service. Through collaboration with caregivers, an Indigenous Speech Language Pathologist helps children learn to communicate with others, understand what others say, develop play skills with peers and adults, say words clearly and be understood, express feelings, ideas, needs and wants. An Indigenous Speech language Pathologist can also support children with school readiness and pre-literacy skill development.

## **ISLP Team Members:**

Caitlin Annable Speech Language Pathologist .8 FTE

Pat Blundon- Speech Language Pathologist Part Time .2 FTE

Michele Nault Mortimer- Team Lead / Clinical Supervisor

## **Highlights**

- Staffing update: Pat started working in January 2022 and Caitlin started in September 2022.
- We have been active in the community, including regular visits to the Pacheedaht Nation and regular visits to local community schools and daycares. We attended the Malahat Nation Health Fair in November 2022.
- We have both experienced success in building and sustaining relationships with families we are working with. Caitlin has many families coming in regularly to the VNFC for appointments, and has embraced the flexibility of the VNFC to find alternative spaces to meet with families (as the ISLP office is not an ideal meeting space).
- Pat has been building a strong positive relationship with Craigflower Elementary and is also embracing flexibility to provide service to students at the school.
- We are also building and sustaining relationships with other professionals. We have participated in meetings with other community-based SLPs (from Queen Alexandra Children's Centre, Island Health Community Health, and the BC Family Resource Hearing Society) to spread information about the ISLP program and also give a voice to cultural safety issues that arise in our shared population.
- We are currently piloting a project to help manage our wait list by connecting with families who are waiting and providing support with a phone call. The goals of this phone call include: making a personal connection with the family, confirming the family has consented to the referral, providing information that may be relevant and helpful to the family while they are on our waitlist (including other resources, such as Jordan's Principle, and specific strategies or suggestions to address parental concerns).

## **Training**

- Moe the Mouse, PODD AAC, Safe Talk, Kids Action, and a Decolonizing Care webinar.

## Challenges

- We continue to maintain an ongoing waitlist of children who require Speech Language Pathology services.
- The increase in referrals in recent months has tripled compared to the previous year.

## Highlights for the upcoming year

- We are going back to the Malahat Nation to conduct hearing screenings for children.
- We are planning to partner with other VNFC departments to offer groups for families, such as the Daycare and the Early Childhood parenting team.
- We plan to continue with community outreach and supporting families on our caseloads and waitlist.
- We have an upcoming meeting with the five South Island school districts to learn how we can best support children on our caseloads who are entering Kindergarten and to spread cultural safety awareness and knowledge.
- We would like to take a practicum student to support learning opportunities for new S-LPs. UBC has expressed interest in sending us a student.
- Pat is representing the VNFC ISLP program on an upcoming podcast with Speech and Audiology Canada (SAC): Shining Lights School S-LP Podcast
- Caitlin will be participating in the VNFC Community Learning Program



Caitlin and Pat at the Malahat Health Fair.



## **Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator Annual Board Report 2022 - 2023**

Jordan's Principle is a legal requirement resulting from the Orders of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Jordan's Principle is a child-first and needs-based principle that aims to eliminate service inequities and delays for First Nations and Inuit children and youth.

### **Jordan's Principle Team:**

Angela Heaton Senior Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator

Beth Young Jordan's Principle Coordinator

Michele Nault Mortimer – Team Lead/ Clinical Supervisor

### **Highlights**

- It has been a busy year for the Jordan's Principle Service Coordination team.
- There are 254 open files on the Jordan's Principle caseload.
- A second Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator was hired on and added to the team in October of 2022.
- 166 new referrals were received.
- The Service Coordinators submitted 153 requests to Indigenous Service Canada (ISC) for funding adjudication which is an increase in submissions of 188% since last fiscal year.
- Our funding request approval rate is 94%.
- There were over \$725,000 in approvals of products, services and supports for First Nations and Inuit children and youth.
- Received a high volume of Allied Health and Dental requests.
- Notable approvals include:
  - A trained service dog to detect seizures for a child with epilepsy.
  - A home renovation to a front porch for safe access to the home as well as new construction of a wheelchair ramp.
  - Installation of a wheelchair transportation system to a family's vehicle so child can easily partake in community outings.
  - A full-time in-home childcare provider to assist a grandmother who has taken on the care of her three high needs grandbabies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome.
  - Group funding for additional staff for a community's summer culture camp including 1:1 staff for a child requiring additional intensive support.
  - Installation of a home alarm system for child with Autism who has a history of running from the home onto the busy highway near the families home.
  - Dorm fees for a youth attending university outside of his home community.

## Challenges

- Have started to see more requests come in for necessities of life including groceries, clothing, beds, baby items (diapers/wipes/formula) and short-term rent coverage.
- Although we have a high approval rate the denied requests of Orthodontic and Recreation is something we are working to address with ISC.
- ISC delays in approvals for submissions and payments for approved requests

## Highlights for the Upcoming Year

- VNFC has been chosen to be in the first round of a new ARC fund (approved request contingency) pilot project. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, ISC has provided VNFC with a contingency fund to facilitate direct payments for the Jordan Principle Service Coordinators approved requests from the VNFC Service Coordinators rather than families and service providers having to go through ISC to access payments.
- The Jordan's Principle team will be expanding and we have posted for the Jordan's Principle Payments Coordinator position.



Beth Young Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator attending a Career and Information event in Sidney

# Victoria Native Friendship Centre



## *Awakening the Warrior Within* Annual Report April 2022- March 2023

Submitted & Compiled By: Glenn Patterson, Family Violence Project Coordinator

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During this reporting period, we completed sessions, 61, 62, 63, 64, and 65 of the “Awakening the Warrior Within” program. These programs are six weeks in length, 12 days of group work each session. We also conducted our summer weekly group VNFC (Victoria Native Friendship Centre) Native Sharing Circle, August 2 to August 30, this was our fifth summer to offer these circles, they were well attended by both men and women. This was in response to requests to have some type of forum in the summer where relationships and family issues could be discussed.

2022 WIWAYANGWACIPI Sundance Ceremony in Merritt BC This was our 7th year, bringing



community members and several VNFC staff to a Sundance Ceremony on the Coldwater Indian Reserve near Merritt BC. We have found this annual ceremony to be an important part of helping our clients and Urban Native community members to reconnect with culture, even if not their own traditional teachings, the path to self awareness is demonstrated.

Session 63 of the Awakening the Warrior Within commenced on November 15, 2022, this is our sixth year offering a modified overall focus of the program to include the idea “How do we give our families and particularly our children good memories of this Christmas season?” Most of the men attending are fathers. We share stories, good and bad, about Christmases in the past. How adults often were wrapped up in their own trauma and abuse issues, acting them out through many forms of dangerous behavior, including intoxication and violence. We ask them to consider how this season, we could provide some joy and positive role modeling for all our relatives, this is not a time for “partying” but a time for giving love and support to our families. We had about 6 consistent attendees and 6 partial attendees. Many try to find time to attend, and we have kept the program flexible to accommodate the men’s needs.

Two shields that were created by our men as personal statements only, representing their own histories.



Many more have expressed an interest, but their attendance has been inconsistent as some men are out seeking employment, training and may be involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Justice/Correctional system.

So, we have created two categories of program certificates “Completed and Participated.” These two categories are explained at the beginning of the sessions so that part-time participants will not have an expectation of receiving a completed certificate. It is made clear to the participants and their social workers/parole officers that this is a non-mandated, voluntary program. It is explained that “You are only here because you want to be here, you want change in your life” The men express that they have felt pushed around by the “system” We challenge them to be their own advocates, to pick up their own lives, and to not wait for someone else to fix their problems.



Covid 19 Protocols were followed at VNFC during this reporting period, with no infections of the virus in our closed sessions. There was complete cooperation by all.

Gratitude and thanks to VNFC, particularly our fine cooking staff, Jon, Earl, and Carrie. They say “food is the good feeling medicine” this is a powerful statement of welcoming and respect to all our participants.

We are grateful to all the men who have decided to step through the doorway and into our “Warrior” program to walk a path of peacemaking in their relationships with their families and the wider community. They are wanting to take up the more traditional roles of males that our men once had in the past, providing safety, security, support, and teachings for the next generation as we continue to break the cycle of Violence for Nothing. They are all truly “Awakened Warriors.”

With Respect Always



Glenn Patterson MEd.  
Facilitator Coordinator  
Family Violence Project  
Program

Sharon Marshall  
Co-facilitator  
Mens Warrior



# Awakening the Woman Warrior Within

2022 – 2023 AGM Report

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Team members:

Julie Bell, Program Coordinator/Facilitator

Cultural Elder, Muriel Pete

This was made to provide copies for sisters representing coming back to circle to find healing!



The Awakening the Warrior Woman Within program was developed to meet the objectives of the knowledge of trauma in relationship to and because of the historical and ongoing impact of colonization and cultural genocide that continues to be expressed through the intergenerational cycles of violence within Indigenous Communities. From this lens participants can better understand and process, using cultural protocol, how they have been impacted by these experiences. This strengthens the understanding of how Indigenous Communities are systemically oppressed and as a result those impacted can become self-oppressive resulting in the identification of personal barriers. This program offers teachings on how to move through and past these barriers.

The facilitators work with the participants through self-identified stories of resiliency that further assist in providing teachings that build on existing strengths and resources. Traditional teachings are also offered on how to move through and past barriers in pursuit of specific goals, healthier lives and improved relationships with self, family, and Community.

The safety of the circle created facilitates implementing change, finding voice, having hope, and experiencing empowerment.

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre offers this program throughout the year and offers participants opportunities with culturally relevant content, nutritious meals, snacks, and bus tickets to and from the program. As well, we can offer participants on site wrap around resources from other VNFC teams with in-house referrals to resources they may need outside of the AWWWP.

Participants are witnessed creating healthy changes, having healthy relationships, and restored coping skills as well as identifying abusive behaviour and leaving abusive relationships.

Water ceremony with Coast Salish Elder.



As the Lead Facilitator having lived and worked (I worked in Family Services prior for many years) within Indigenous Community all my life I fully understand the context of the barriers that our participants need support transitioning through. I understand the value and profound impact that Culture has as a medicine to support and transform the lives of those who experience it.

Traditional Ribbon skirts made with purpose and teachings with our participants.



All participants made Sweat gowns. They were made with the intention of and the purpose to attend our yearly sweat lodge.



Our participants and Elder that attended the final Sweat Lodge ceremony.

We offer Traditional Art practices and land-based medicine. We recently had Cultural Elder, Muriel Pete, from Merritt, BC who is a Sundancer and a Pipe Carrier attend session. She co-facilitated sessions in December 2022 through to February 2023. Our program consisted of six weeks of sessions that ran from 10:00 to 1:00, three days a week. During session, two days are dedicated to working on coping tools and strategies and intensive group work with topics from our work binder all within our sharing/talking circle. One day is dedicated to Art; we made ribbon skirts for a walk we attended in Vancouver, BC for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We made sweat gowns for a sweat we will be attending and moccasins. Our ending ceremony is focused on honoring the work everyone did and a Traditional feast is served to the participants.

Julie Bell Facilitator and Elder Muriel Pete ceremony.



Traditional Elk Stew was served at our final



We receive referrals from in-house at VNFC, Transition Houses, Ministry of Children and Families and self referrals. More recently, due to Covid a lot of referrals have been online. We

have an intake process that ensures the applicant is a fit for the program, and the program is a fit for the applicant.

Below are some of the feedback comments we have received from participants:

“I met a positive group of sisters that I can heal with. I learned more about myself I circle ceremony and this helps me not go back into violent relationships.”

“The fun outings on land help me with all we are working on, especially the water ceremony.”

“I am learning how to handle new ways to be calm.”

“I love the group. Sad that group is almost over. I love our connections.”

“This circle has exceeded my expectations’ of connecting and learning new ways and Traditional ways.”

“An amazing journey to embark on, amazing staff and a wonderful opportunity.”

“I have my identity as a First Nations woman.”

“The amount of care and thought Julie put into each session provided me with a valuable learning and the safest way for me to share and heal.”

“I have no words for how beautiful this program is....”

“This group is lifechanging.”

“Julie is a very lovable personality, funny with a very welcoming heart. She is well spoken and has such positive energy. I very much enjoyed the group knowing I can be myself and I felt understood and heard. A very relaxing environment was created. Thank you so much for your support, peace be with you. Klecco, Klecco.”

I am grateful and look forward to continuing to offer The Awakening the Warrior Woman Within as I see the impact this program has on the lives of the women in our Community who so deserve to come home to themselves in such a good way.



**Shelter Support Team:**

Alistair N.  
Wanda G.  
Michelle M.  
Victor S.  
Walter A.  
Jackson M.  
Brian M.

**Shelter Chef**

Justina S.

**Shelter Clinical Support**

Kalynka Cherkosh

**Shelter Coordinators**

Ian L.  
Diego E.  
Kim H.

**Shelter Lead Coordinators**

Jesse R.  
Marcus M.

**Shelter Team Lead:**

Chelsea Clouthier  
Paul Oppers

**Shelter Summary**

The housing crisis and opioid epidemic continue to impact our communities, leading to an increase in the number of people seeking our services. The shelter has a capacity for 25 individuals, with a few extra spots available in case of extreme weather conditions.

At VNFC shelter, our primary goal is to create a secure and pleasant environment for our guests who are seeking an alternative to shelters with lower barriers. In such environments, the challenges related to mental health and addictions can significantly impact our unhoused neighbors. While we welcome individuals facing multiple barriers and actively dealing with mental health and addiction issues, we kindly request that our guests refrain from openly using substances while on the premises to create a tranquil environment for others to rest. We offer amenities such as hot showers, warm meals, laundry services, and access to toiletries as needed.

Unfortunately, as in many of our communities, the VNFC has observed a rise in the number of individuals seeking shelter who are grappling with mental health and addiction challenges. We strive to accommodate those at high risk despite being a high barrier shelter. However, there are instances where we must prioritize the safety of our staff and guests, resulting in the regrettable refusal of entry to individuals exhibiting threatening behavior, engaging in assault or violence, or having complex needs beyond our capacity. Throughout the shelter season, we

faced challenges due to hospitals discharging individuals who were ill-prepared for a non-medical care environment. This situation jeopardized the well-being of these individuals, placed additional stress on our staff, and created discomfort for other guests. We are observing a rising trend in the average age of individuals seeking shelter, with a notable overrepresentation of seniors experiencing the adverse impacts of the housing crisis.

The shelter began this year amidst a storm, both literally and figuratively. The VNFC Shelter Program encountered difficulties in finding experienced frontline staff and a qualified team lead, reflecting the staffing shortages prevalent in the sector. A snowstorm was approaching, as the need to open weighed heavily. Despite these challenges, we opened our doors on December 17th, just as one of the heaviest snowstorms hit. As the cold hit the city and flakes began to fall, our unhoused neighbours were freezing and desperate to be indoors. The staff received on-the-job training and welcomed our unhoused neighbors with enthusiasm and open arms. While some staff members lacked prior job experience, they all went above and beyond, demonstrating their capability, warmth, thoughtfulness, and resilience in tackling every new challenge with empathy and non-judgment.

We hope to have many of the dedicated staff return to the program next year and are exploring the implementation of training programs and workshops prior to the shelter opening to further harness the potential and working capacity of this remarkable team.

### **Community Donors**

- Country Grocer funded with grocery cards
- BC Pension staff donated money for shelter needs
- Cobbs Bakery supplied bread and baked goods
- Café Fantastico supplied the Shelter with coffee and baked goods
- Victoria Rotary Club donated money for operational costs

### **Shelter Closing Roast Beef Dinner**

Lead Coordinators Marcus and Jesse helping Clinical Lead Kalyinka and her son Gabe with the last night of the shelter roast beef dinner.





Shelter Support staff from left to right: Jackson, Michelle, Walter and Lead Coordinator Marcus.

# Territory for the Arts 2022 – 2023 Annual Update

Respectfully submitted by  
Shona Collison, Art Wellness Programs/Clinical Support

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Territory for the Arts was running a full weekly Wednesday group with two Art Therapy Practicum students from Vancouver Art Therapy Institute (VATI). Groups offerings were by application only as space is limited. The directives offered were 5 weeks in length and ran until March 30th. The Practicum students have been enthusiastic, consistent, and passionate about the work they are doing with Community.



The Territory for the Arts is also utilized by Indigenous artists offering cultural based directives to small groups of Community. Rain Cabana-Boucher, a Michif/British settler interdisciplinary artist, was on site in the Territory for the Arts Oct 17<sup>th</sup> from 1-3pm and Nov 4<sup>th</sup> from 1-3pm to offer her Beading-Laying-Flowers workshop. Rain was beading on orange flower for every Indigenous child found buried on residential school grounds.

This workshop encouraged Community to bead flowers and to contribute these to the final show of 'Laying Flowers in Honor of the Children and Survivors of Residential Schools' being held at the Cedar Hill Rec Centre.

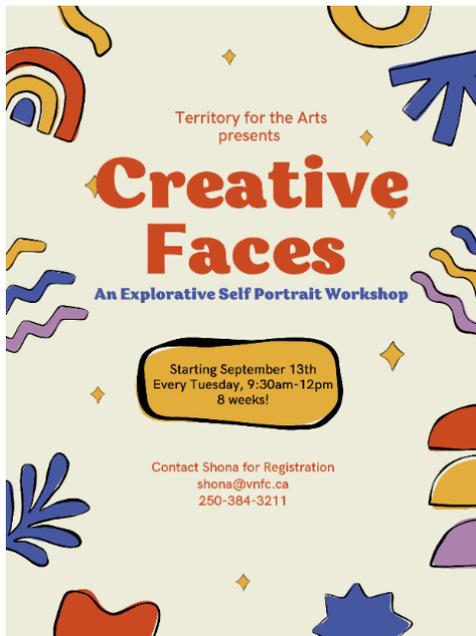
Mark Seabrook, Indigenous Anishinaabe artist, was visiting from out of town and offered a Community art class on Woodlands art September 26<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-12:00. Participation was at capacity and all participants left with two art pieces.

VNFC is continuing to work in partnership with CIAT on a film featuring Indigenous Artists from the three local nations, focused on Art and the role it plays in healing from the ongoing

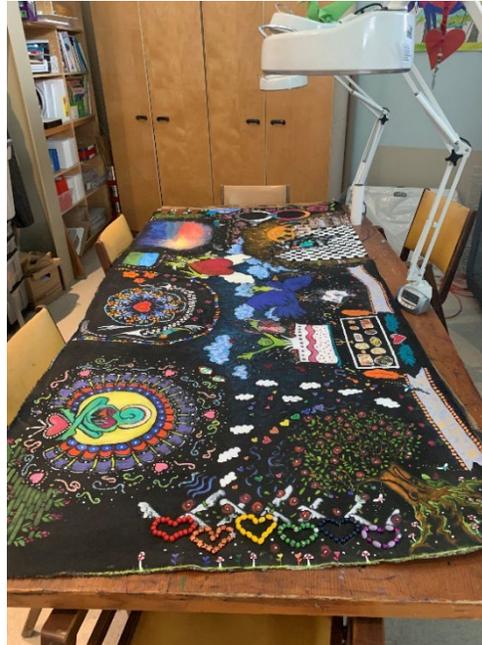
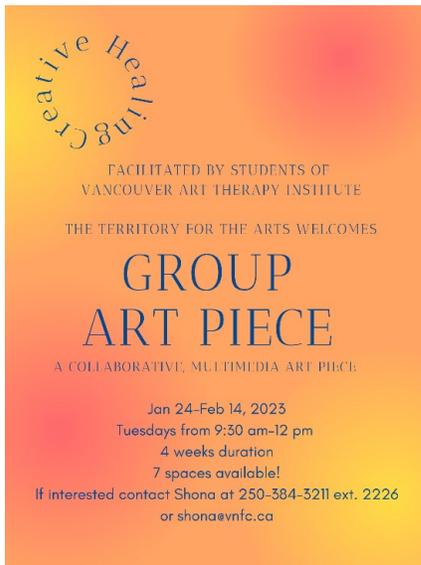


effects of cultural genocide.

With programming opening at VNFC art directives have also been offered to groups within the VNFC such as the Men's and Women's Warrior Programs and the Elders program. The closed women's Art Therapy processing group will resume in April. We will have two new practicum students from CIAT that will offer individual and group Art directives. These groups already have the interest and commitment of Community members who wish to sign up. These process group has an interview process attached to membership in the program and will be advertised via the usual channels.



Final group piece for the fiscal year.



The Territory for the Arts will continue to provide Art Medicine to Community and staff over the next year with new practicum students bringing in new directives and continuing to offer art as medicine.

# Xa Xe SFELITKEL Head Start

## 2022 – 2023 Annual Report

### Report for VNFC Board of Directors

Respectfully Submitted By: Kari-Ann Leadbitter

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The Head Start team has been working diligently to implement and practice the moto of “Lead with Love”. We have also been actively adding more culture whenever possible to help our children thrive and play in an Indigenous space.

### Program Team

*Team Leads- Sarah Russ and Kari-Ann Leadbitter*

*Knowledge Keepers- Sharon and Eileen*

*Garden Support- Mr. Organic (Dave Friend)*

*Infant Team – Jordan, Linda, Sam and Tash*

*Toddler Team – Fatma, Janessa, Fe,*

*3-year-old Team – Makoto, Angela, Tristan, Chantu and Emma*

*4-year-old Team – Laura, Christina, Kirsten*

*Support Worker Position- Eliza*

*Vacant – 1 staff member for 4-year-old room*

### Highlights of This Reporting Period:

- Successfully completed our two PEP evaluations, the head start program chose us as the program to honour with being the head start for all the teams to see and learn from.
- Trained all staff on Moe the Moe
- Trained all staff in Inclusive Child Care Toolkit Training

### Updates of This Reporting Period:

- Our waitlist is currently full, and we are prioritizing Indigenous Children as a Aboriginal Head Start Program
- We currently have one child working with our ISLP and two children on the waitlist for ISLP waitlist at the daycare. We have also been collaborating with the ISLP Team on how we could have community engagement and preventative services shared. ISLPs will come to a parent circle in the upcoming months for questions parents might have as a group.
- The Conservatory pf Music continues to support our children’s learning in music and rhythm through songs, instruments, and movement.
- Our daycare has been in partnership with Camosun College for approximately 3 years. We have supported practicum students graduating from the ELC Indigenous program, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) that supports our ECE’s to obtain their IT certification.
- We have also helped support student from Camosun and Sprott Shaw students gain practicum experience.
- Our children practice mindfulness and mediation to calm their bodies down. We are fortunate to have two teachers that are qualified as yoga instructors that support stretching and breathing with all our age groups.

- Mr. Organic continues to share garden teaching with the children in all groups. Our infant room currently has plants growing in the windows and Mr. Organic waters them with the infants. Mr. Organic works with the children at gardening levels that met them where they're at.

**Wisdom Keeper**

- We are so fortunate to have Sharon Neel (Nuu-chah-nulth from Ahousaht) and Eileen Henry (Coast Salish from Penelakut Tribe) supporting our children and guiding our staff as Wisdom Keepers in the Daycare. They both offer cultural knowledge and beautiful spirit to all the children.

**Stretches - Areas for growth:**

- As a Head Start Program, we aim to have a large amount of parent engagement and participation. We have had a solid group of parents attend the monthly parent circles; however, we're hoping to have more parent collaboration from all of our parent. We are attempting to break down barriers such as childcare and dinner by providing both childcare and a meal to those who attend the circles.
- Creating a cultural calendar that represents all the children's seasonal events. The hope for this is to raise up the children's traditional ways from all the different Indigenous communities that attend our Head Start Program. We also will add different cultures of our staff, non-Indigenous children and families.

**Statistics:**

Number of children                      53

**Feel Goods:**

- Our philosophy is still To Lead with Love  
     We have the privilege spending our days with the children we love and even when we are having challenging moments, we remember our philosophy.  
     "At the end of the day my goal is to be able to say I lead with love. I show love and I receive love. I give love but I also take love." -Sarah Russ



Teacher Share Shoes



We have gentle hands



We do Yoga



We garden outside



We explore



We look



We care



We listen

# VNFC Properties Team Annual Report 2022 - 2023

Respectfully submitted by  
VNFC Properties Team

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## **Property Management Team:**

Alexis Moore, Property Manager  
Chelsea Tuis, Assistant Property Manager

## **Tenant Support Team – Reaching Home Program:**

Bryan Adair, Tenant Support Worker  
2<sup>nd</sup> Tenant Support Worker, VACANT Position

Angela Mckinley, Building Services Manager  
Chris Allen, Building Services Maintenance  
Jeremiah Jeffrey, Custodial/Maintenance  
Walter August, Property Maintenance

VNFC Properties manages 77 units of safe and affordable housing for Urban Indigenous community. Staff and members in our community respectfully acknowledge the territory of the Lekwungan Peoples whose land we live, work, and play.

Siem Le'lum – “Respected House” located at 120 Gorge Road East  
Phase 1 – Previously a Traveller’s Inn transformed 26 units into self-contained suites in June 2013. Consisting of Studios and Double Studios, housing singletons going to school, and Elders. Our Double Studios are very unique to which they can serve as reunification units for single parents.

Phase 2 – Completed in October 2017 consisting of 15 multi-family units.  
Alongside this Phase 2 project, the Property Office/Community Amenity building was developed.

Fernwood House located at 1321 Fernwood Road. Consisting of 8 multi-family units with a small community space, for various programming.

Salish Sea House – Our newest addition! Located at 7611 Central Saanich Road. The Tsawout First Nation, BC Housing, and Salish Sea Housing Society partnered in this project to develop 28 affordable rental units suited for working families. *Expected to be ready for occupancy September 2023.*

Cedar House is located at 1250 Balmoral Avenue. This fair-sized character home is currently housing Binkadi Community Services, which supports youth with different needs previously in

government care or that have aged out of government care.

“Qhahtumtun” located along the Koksilah River – 4425 Riverside Road, Duncan. A quaint series of tiny cabin stays, housing our inherited tenant Suzanne who is a knowledgeable gardener who keeps and maintains the grounds.

## Property Preservation

Annual Unit Inspections have come and gone for a second year under this management team and will stay consistent, carried out yearly mid-spring so tenants know when to expect them. Prior to the inspections under Reaching Home Funds, Tenant Support arranges a large junk removal bin as part of a spring-cleaning initiative, this year we also provided all-natural cleaning kits from Mint Cleaning Co. The hope is to roll this into a mini refillery program, our main goal is for tenants to have access to natural non-toxic products to upkeep housekeeping and maintain a healthy tenancy. Two of our tenants have been offering cleaning services to fellow community members over the past few months. To support them with this initiative, we purchased and assembled cleaning kits for them, containing a multitude of cleaning supplies they will be able to use to continue the fantastic work they have been doing, both on the property and elsewhere.



Phase one of the restoration and reinforcement plan for SL-Phase 1 Balcony/Walkway was completed this year with Kinetic Construction. This year during Annual Inspections it was discovered Fernwood also needs similar reinforcement work done, both plans are costly and big projects to undertake in the coming year or two.

## Tenant Engagement -Some Highlights

### Plant Medicine

Siem Lelum hosted a workshop on traditional medicine with Elder Jean Smith, in which she shared her knowledge of medicinal teas and salves passed down through generations of her family. The attendees all expressed having enjoyed the workshop, with many sticking around afterward to chat with Jean. We feel that these events offer a great opportunity for community building and cultural learning among our tenants, and we look forward to hosting more of them in the future.

### Healing Circles

Our monthly healing circle has expanded from its initial concept as a space to grieve the terrible news of the burial sites discovered across the country, and associated residential school traumas, being unearthed. Through community engagement and VNFC Elder Mark Atleo, it has become a monthly group that shares their personal stories, current challenges, fears, hopes, and successes among each other and receive community and cultural support and care. There is a core group of 5-7 who are regulars, but there is always variability in attendance, and it is becoming better attended as time goes on. Connections made within the circle are being carried outside into day-to-day life, as tenants form friendships and offer support outside of the circle.

### **Drum making**

Skins and rounds have been ordered for a drum-making workshop with tenants.

### **Food Security**

VNFC Tenants are so grateful for the hamper program, 29 residents are signed up to receive the bi-weekly hampers, which equates to over 50% of tenants coming in to engage and benefitting from the program. Tenants have become more comfortable participating in community trading, borrowing, or gifting hamper items they do not need to another tenant who does, or lending ingredients when tenants



are cooking to help a temporary shortfall. The communication on the VNFC Housing Facebook group is continuing to increase as more tenants are requesting to be added, and mutually resourcing and supporting each other. The garden at Siem Lelum is thriving, tenants are welcome to access this resource individually and harvest as needed. Many of our Fernwood tenants have signed on for Fernwood NRG's Good Food Box subscription. A non-profit fruit and vegetable box program. Lastly, BC Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program is underway for participating markets across Greater Victoria.

### **Challenges**

The rise in the cost of living in Victoria is putting an understandable strain on everyone, and our tenants, in a state of already heightened financial vulnerability, are no exception. There has been an increase in requests for short- or long-term subsidies, crisis grants from the ministry, and hamper intakes. The long-term effects of this can be seen in some tenants struggling with their mental and emotional health. We are hoping to increase the range of cultural support we can provide or facilitate access to help mitigate these effects. The need for tangible supports around food and material items is an ongoing concern.



## VNFC Youth Department Annual Report 2022-2023

Respectfully submitted by Aly Waddell  
Manager of Youth Programs

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### Our Team

After Anne Bissonnette departed the Youth Team in July 2022, Aly Waddell, previously the Administrative Coordinator and Youth Support Worker, stepped into the role of Manager of Youth Programs.

Kailyn Johnson has been on the team as a Youth Support Worker for almost 4 years. In January 2023, she took on the role of Assistant Team Leader and Brief Services Youth Worker, a new role, created by Aly.

Abbey Goertzen and Madeleine Burns joined the team in May 2022 as Youth Support Workers.

Olivia Moore joined the team in October 2022, joining Brayden Cook in our Youth Drop-in Program as Drop-in Co-coordinator.

Tony Cecchetti went on parental leave in June 2022 from his role as Youth and Family Counsellor. Shiloh Underwood took over this role in November 2022 and Tony moved to a new position within VNFC upon his return.

In March 2023, Sandra Williams took over Kailyn's role of Youth Support Worker.



*Aly, Maddi, Anne, Kailyn, and Brayden at the 2022 Pride Parade*

### Current Youth Team

Aly Waddell – *Manager Youth Programs*  
Kailyn Johnson – *Assistant Team Lead/Brief Services Youth Support Worker*  
Abbey Goertzen – *Youth Support Worker*  
Madeleine Burns – *Youth Support Worker*  
Sandra Williams – *Youth Support Worker*  
Brayden Cook- *RAVE Drop-in Co-Coordinator*  
Olivia Moore – *RAVE Drop-in Co-Coordinator*  
Shiloh Underwood – *Youth and Family Counsellor*

### Youth Support Services

Our Youth Support Workers (YSW) provide wrap-around services to youth 12-25. Each full-time

YSW carries an average caseload of 15-20 youth, maintaining weekly appointments, with high-risk cases accessing support as much as two times a week. The department had been managing a waitlist for over a year, and just this March, the team was able to open for intake again for a limited amount of youth. In January 2023, the team introduced the position of Brief Services Support Worker in efforts to be able to reach more youth, especially those on the waitlist for services. The position can support youth for up to 3 months and can help with referrals and connections to other resources. There is also a daytime brief services drop-in which happens every second Friday. With our regular YSW's being able to work with clients for years, we felt we needed a shorter-term service to see clients who may be in crisis or only needing short term support. We are very excited to see how this position continues to grow and adapt to the needs of our community.

The Youth Addictions Worker role remained vacant for a year after Anne Bissonnette left the position to be the manager in December 2021. Funding was then not secured so currently we do not have a formal position for the Youth Addiction Worker and hope to get funding soon. This being said, our newest support worker, Sandra, has knowledge and experience as well as a passion to work with our youth struggling with substance use. Though her title is not formally Youth Addiction Support, she has taken on those clients needing support with such. Our Youth Addiction Support program provides support to Indigenous youth experiencing issues related to substance use amid an opioid crisis. Many of the challenges youth face are related to the impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma and are systemic (homelessness, unemployment, lack of access to culturally responsive health care and stigma) and several of these youth require intensive and long-term support.

Common themes in support provided include:

- Emotional/mental health support
- navigating legal systems
- accessing/maintaining housing or shelter
- teaching life skills
- providing transportation/bus passes
- supporting through child protection disclosures
- advocacy with MCFD, medical systems and school districts
- making referrals to other community resources
- providing access to traditional medicines
- resume and job preparation
- addressing food insecurity
- providing access to personal hygiene items, clothing, sexual health supplies, and harm reduction supplies

### **RAVE Youth Drop-In Centre**

The RAVE Youth Drop-in Centre focuses on providing culturally relevant, fun, and educational opportunities for youth aged 12-18 years old. Our programming has been working to increase its hours since re-opening post-pandemic. Currently, Drop-in is running Tuesday-Thursday from 4:30 PM-8:30 PM, with a goal of eventually being open an additional night of the week. This program focuses on promoting wellness for our youth through art, recreation, sports, cultural activities, life skills, community outings, and more! One activity youth have been enjoying doing is cooking nights which have included learning how to make sushi, fried rice, fry bread, cookies, and more! For cultural nights,

we often do activities like medicine bag making, mini drum making, beading, medicine walks, and dream catcher making. Other recreational activities we did this year included taking youth to escape rooms, playing basketball and soccer with ISPARC, going bowling, axe throwing, and to the Blanchard Gardens holiday light display.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the team hosted a barbecue to celebrate the end of another school year and to honour the year's high school graduates. It was a wonderful way to wrap up Drop-in before starting our Summer Camps.

### **Holiday Food Hampers:**

This year, with the help from the Home Depot Orange Door Project grant, we were able to provide our youth and families with much needed food security for the December holiday season. We put together and distributed 100 food hampers to youth and their families. With the help of Backpack Buddies and Portofino, we were able to include delicious bread and cookies in these hampers. We also put together sugar cookie kits so that youth and families could make holiday cookies together. We were so grateful to be able to support our youth and families last holiday season, especially with the rising costs of groceries.



### **RAVE Youth Spring Break Camp**

During Spring Break, Kailyn took 4 youth to the Gathering Our Voices (GOV) Conference held in the Fraser Valley this year. The youth had a blast, and participated in many awesome workshops.

The VNFC also planned their own youth conference called the Youth Freedom Gathering which took place the week after GOV. Youth had the opportunity to partake in a similar style conference for no cost. Youth were offered many educational workshops as well as fun community outings. Some activities youth participated in were corn husk doll making, a song writing workshop, "chillin' with the Elders", an outing to the Malahat Skywalk, Wildplay Adventure Park, and a basketball camp! Youth also got hoodies, shirts, and bags to take home thanks to our friends at Out of the Blue Design!



*Left: Youth on the ferry to GOV  
Right: GOV opening ceremony*



## RAVE Youth Summer Camp

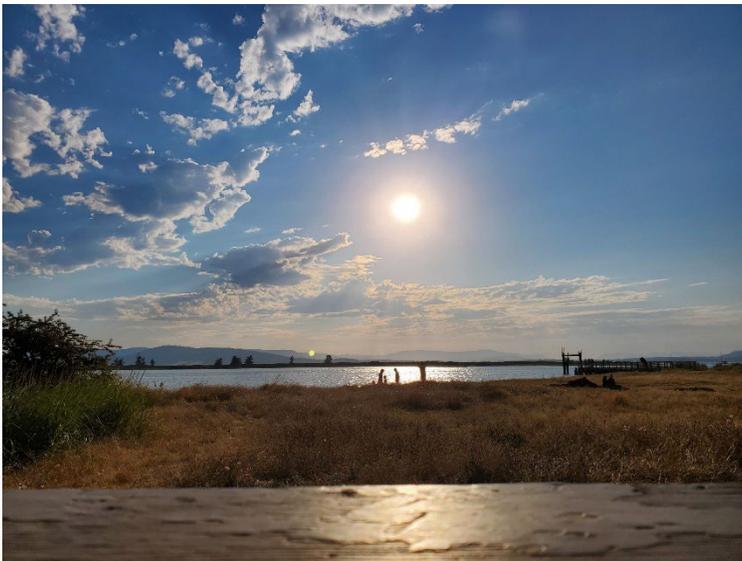
The Youth Department hosted four weeks of summer camps spread out through July and August. Youth were eager to participate, and the team hosted almost 20 youth during these weeks, and we hope to grow this number next year.

We reserved one week of camp for our returning partner, MISCELLANEOUS Productions, for a special collaboration. MISCELLANEOUS brought facilitators including Street dance professionals, Youth Interns, a Theatre/Film director, and a professional Percussionist for youth to work with on making their very own production. On the last day of camp, youth were able to present their project if they wanted! MISCELLANEOUS also gifted each participant a brand-new pair of shoes to wear for the camp, and more specifically for the dance portion.



*Left: Youth learning to drum  
Right: Youth doing the worm!!*

Our summer camps have historically brought youth on a camping trip. This year was the first year since the pandemic that we were able to take youth out on the land for a multi-day trip again. Youth went to Sidney Spit for 4 days and had a blast!



*Left: Youth on the beach at Sidney Spit  
Right: Making dreamcatchers at camp*



## Youth & Family Counselor

The Youth & Family Counselor continued another year in partnership with School District 61 and the Indigenous Education Department. This fall, Shiloh Underwood took over the position after Tony Cecchetti moved to a new role at the centre. This role has been an essential support to students and staff. Shiloh consistently connects with 35 youth one-to-one as well as in group settings over lunch period to provide support to as many students as possible. With this high demand for services, the role was split between Reynold's High School and Shoreline Middle School. There is a clear demand for this role to be expanded and we hope in the future that we can have more of these positions within the school districts.

## 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigequeer Programming

This year's annual 2SLGBTQIA+ Gathering was the first in many years since the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a huge success and we had over 100 youth and community members attend! We had over 15 community organizations set up booths in our gym to share their valuable resources, as well as we had workshops and a catered lunch! We had special guests Snotty Nose Rez Kid's facilitate a Question-and-Answer session with our youth and youth then got tickets to their show which happened the same night! Thank you to UVIC and the Farquhar for helping us fund this visit and for the tickets to the show! Lunch was a feast of Indian Tacos thanks to Seefood Catering (Jessica Sault). The workshops we hosted included:

- The Foundry – Accessing Gender Affirming Care
- Cosplay and Identity – a workshop by a youth facilitator
- Representative for Children and Youth – Know Your Rights
- Holly Reid – Sleep Hygiene
- Medicine Pouches with Elders
- Community Fridge – Queer Futurities and Mutual Aid
- Drag Make-up Workshop with Immocolata Vintage and Riel Deadly
- Mini Drug Making with Zofia
- Door Prizes



Left: SNRK Q&A +  
Community Booth  
Right: Kailyn meeting SNRK

The team has been glad to be running monthly Drop-in nights for our 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigequeer youth. Activities have included pronoun bracelet making, a swim night, a movie night, a vision board night, a medicine walk, and more! Youth and VNFC staff also registered in the June 2022 Pride Parade, another first since the pandemic! It was a wonderful day of celebration, and we plan to do it again this year.



*Youth and VNFC Staff at the Victoria Pride Parade in June 2022!*

**Youth Programs Stats:**

Total Points of Service	Youth Served	Age Range:
9611	430	12-25

**Staff Training & Conferences**

- ASIST Suicide First Aid
- Suicide to Hope
- SafeTalk Train the Trainer
- Support to Practice Supervision Leadership Training
- Anti-oppressive De-escalation Skills Training
- Foodsafe Level 1
- Psychological First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid

**Thank You to Our Funders:**

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- BCAAFC
- Donors

