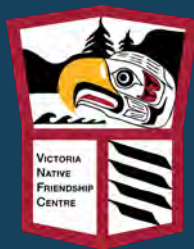


2024 Annual Report

Fiscal Year April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024



Photo by Rebecca Mabee



Victoria Native Friendship Centre

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



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About VNFC

History

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre has been in existence since 1969. We are open to provide services to the estimated over 21,000 Urban Indigenous people living off-reserve in the greater Victoria area and southern Vancouver Island, including 4,500+ residents on-reserve. The Centre also provides temporary assistance to a sizeable population of Indigenous individuals and families from First Nations and urban Centres across Canada.

Mandate

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

Goals and Objectives

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

- To meet the needs of people of Indigenous origin who are making a transition to the urban community;
- To provide central and suitable facilities where counseling, 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 Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens, and promote planning with government, health, welfare, church and other agencies to improve the quality of services and facilities for Indigenous people in the community;
- To assist and undertake, if necessary, any program or activity designed to promote the welfare of people of Indigenous origin in the community; and
- To encourage the public to take an informed interest in the promotion of these objectives and in the general wellbeing of Indigenous people.

Structure

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

About VNFC cont'd

Memberships and Affiliations

The Victoria Native Friendship is a member of the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), and a United Way member agency. The Centre is affiliated with the First Nations Interagency Committee, the First Nations Health Committee, Coast Salish Employment & Training, Indigenous Education Advisory Board (Camosun College), CAPC, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, South Island Indigenous Authority, Downtown Services Providers, Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Social Service Agencies of BC and others.

Funding Sources

The Centre receives program and administration funding from a variety of federal, provincial, and Indigenous organizations. These include the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Ministry for Children and Family Development, Island Health Authority, The Victoria Foundation, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, Community Action Program for Children, the BCAAFC, the NAFC, and family and community foundations, and private donors.

Community Partners

The 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. We would also like to thank all of those who pledged and contributed to our 2023 Small Business Pledge, a meaningful way for the business community to contribute towards reconciliation.

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

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ·Songhees First Nation | ·BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres | ·FPCC– Sense of Place, Heritage Stewardship |
| ·Esquimalt Nation | ·Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness | ·Indigenous People's Resilience Fund |
| ·Malahat First Nation | ·Aboriginal Headstart | ·M'akola Group of Societies |
| ·Pacheedaht First Nation | ·Aboriginal Housing Management Association | ·New Relationship Trust |
| ·Pauquachin First Nation | ·Coast Salish Employment & Training Society | ·Salish Sea Housing |
| ·Scia'new First Nation (Beecher Bay) | ·First Nations Health Authority | ·School District 61 – Indigenous Nations Education Division (INED) |
| ·T'Sou-ke First Nation | ·First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC)– Braided Knowledge Fund | ·School District 62 Indigenous Education |
| ·Tsartlip First Nation | | ·Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services |
| ·Tsawout First Nation | | |
| ·Tseycum First Nation | | |
| ·Métis Nation of Greater Victoria | | |
| ·National Association of Friendship Centres | | |

Community Partners cont'd

- Bank of Nova Scotia
- BC Arts Council
- BC Civic Forfeiture
- BC Gaming
- BC Housing
- BC Pension staff
- Bruce and Patricia Saunders
- Camosun College
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Capital Health Region
- Catholic Diocese Indigenous Reconciliation Fund
- Christ Church Cathedral parish
- Church of St John the Divine parish
- City of Victoria
- Clint and Carole Forster
- CMHC- Housing Challenge
- Community Action Program for Children
- Cool Aid
- F.K. Morrow Foundation
- Fortis BC
- Future Generations Fund
- Good Food Box
- Greater Victoria Public Library
- Health Canada
- Heritage Canada- Truth and Reconciliation
- Home Depot- Langford
- Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada
- Indigenous Agriculture Foundation of BC
- Indigenous Reconciliation Fund- Catholic Diocese
- Island Health Authority
- Kiwanis Club
- Lake Family Foundation
- Local quilters and knitters who donate handmade baby quilts and baby clothes for our newborns
- Maytree Foundation
- McConnell Foundation
- McLean Foundation
- Media One
- Metcalf Foundation
- NICHI
- Order of St John of Jerusalem
- Pacific Blue Cross
- Parent Support Services
- Peter Gilgan Foundation
- Provincial Employees Community Service Fund
- Real Estate Foundation
- Rina M. Bidin Foundation
- Rotary Harbourside
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Ruthi Wicks
- Saanich Municipality
- Second Harvest
- Service Canada-FVPP
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- Small Business Pledge participants
- Success by Six
- TD Challenge
- Telus Community Fund
- Tiny Foundation
- United Way of South Vancouver Island
- University of Victoria
- Van City Credit Union Fund
- Vandekerkhove Foundation
- Victoria Best Babies
- Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- Victoria Foundation
- Victoria Real Estate Board
- Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre

Board of Directors Report

2023-2024

My name is David Dick, also known as SUMÉ, t. I am from the Songhees Nation. My father is Dr. Baptiste (Skip) Dick-Lexixekek, and my mother is Linda Dick from the Songhees Nation. In late fall of 2023, I was elected as the new President of our Board of Directors. I am honoured to be taking on this new role and carrying on our family legacy with this wonderful organization my father and mother started in the early 70's.



I want to express my gratitude to Monique Gray-Smith, our former President, for her tremendous work, which did not go unnoticed. Hay'sxw'qa/Thank you for your dedication and time in your role as President of our board.

Before I proceed with my report, I would like to acknowledge that the VNFC is located on the traditional territory of the LəkYwəŋən Nations, Songhees & Esquimalt. Establishing a strong relationship with the LəkYwəŋən Nations is our top priority. To do so, we need to strengthen our internal connections with the lands in which we work on today.

I am delighted to share my sincere reflections on the VNFC. From its inception, the VNFC has proven to be an invaluable source of assistance, bridging the gaps where local and federal organizations fall short in supporting our people. While we are not the exclusive service provider for our community, we are one of the many Indigenous organizations in the area effecting substantial change, contributing to meaningful and enduring improvements in the lives of our urban Indigenous population. The foundation of the VNFC is to offer guidance and support to our Indigenous people who have relocated here, a principle instilled in me by my father, Dr. Baptiste (Skip) Dick-Lexixekek. The commitment to the center's achievements has been truly inspiring over the years. I am confident that we will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of our urban Indigenous people who chose to call the LəkYwəŋən territory home.

As part of the VNFC effort to strengthen our internal connections with the local First Nations, our Executive Director, Ron Rice organized our first-ever Gathering of Leaders - VNFC & South Island Chiefs & Councils gathering in early May. We had representatives from 2 of the LəkYwəŋən Nations, along with T-Souke and Malahat First Nations. The VNFC staff warmly welcomed all the guests and provided a tour of the center, sharing information about the valuable work and services offered there. After the tour, a wonderful meal was served, and two of the original founders of the VNFC shared their thoughts with everyone present. This successful event required immense effort from all the VNFC staff. Hay'sxw'qa/Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this gathering possible.

Board of Directors Report

cont'd 2023-2024

Strategic Plan Update

The Strategic Plan has now been completed and will be presented to the Board of Directors at our monthly membership meeting in May. Further discussions will continue before it is shared with our general public.

Board Members Update

I would like to welcome our three new Board members: Sherry Jakesta, Nigel Decontie, and Rosy Hartman. We all extend a warm welcome and are truly grateful for their invaluable contributions to our discussions, decisions, and planning. We also would like to acknowledge Sekwan Wabasca, who stepped down from her role as one of our Board of Directors. Her passion and dedication over the years are truly appreciated.

In conclusion, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge all our Board of Directors and say Hay'sxw'qa/Thank You for taking time out of your busy schedule every month. Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to our Executive Director, Ron Rice, for his dedication and passion in the growth of the VNFC over the years. I also want to recognize all the staff at the VNFC for their commitment and the care they put into their work at the center. They provide a welcoming environment for our urban Indigenous community.

Hay'sxw'qa/Thank you

Warm Regards,

David (SÉMÁ,t) Dick,
President of the VNFC Board of Directors



Executive Director's Report 2023-2024

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.

More than ever, I am proudest when a community member stops me to speak of a person or a program from VNFC that has lifted their spirits, helped them through an issue or challenge; has stood by them or stood up for them.

The people who work here inspire me. Big huy ch q'u to our Assistant Executive Director Kari Hutchison for standing by me and helping me to lead this growing organization. During our two-day strategic planning sessions last fall, we not only considered the future of the VNFC, but reveled in the impactful history. Much gratitude to our friends at Coueraj who facilitated and also to long-time VNFC member and former board member Janice Simcoe for stepping in to help us with the writing of the plan. A special thanks to those who came to us from sister agencies, community, and community partners. This exercise brought many ideas and strategies, including hosting an annual gathering of Chiefs and Councils from the local First Nations. We will be hosting our second Gathering of Leaders next spring.

We had difficult news this past winter as our federal language program funding was not renewed. We have been informed that the First Peoples Cultural Council will no longer consider VNFC to be an Indigenous-led organization. We will be defending ourselves on both these fronts and our national office, NAFC, has stepping in to help. After years of advocating for a year-round shelter, we were finally informed that our designation has been changed to permanent shelter. We are now open 365 days per year, and working on expanding that service.

Our venture to disrupt the Cowichan Sweater industry, Knit With Purpose, is doing well. The documentary we executive-produced, The Cowichan Sweater: Our Knitted Legacy, was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award and is available to stream on CBC.ca or CBC Gem.

I also want to thank the volunteers who make up our board of directors for their continued diligence, commitment, passion, and support as we work through another bustling year. The board empowers me and the VNFC staff so we can serve the community in all the ways we do. Huy tsep q'u – Thanking you all

Ron Rice-Wush'q, M.G.C.
VNFC Executive Director

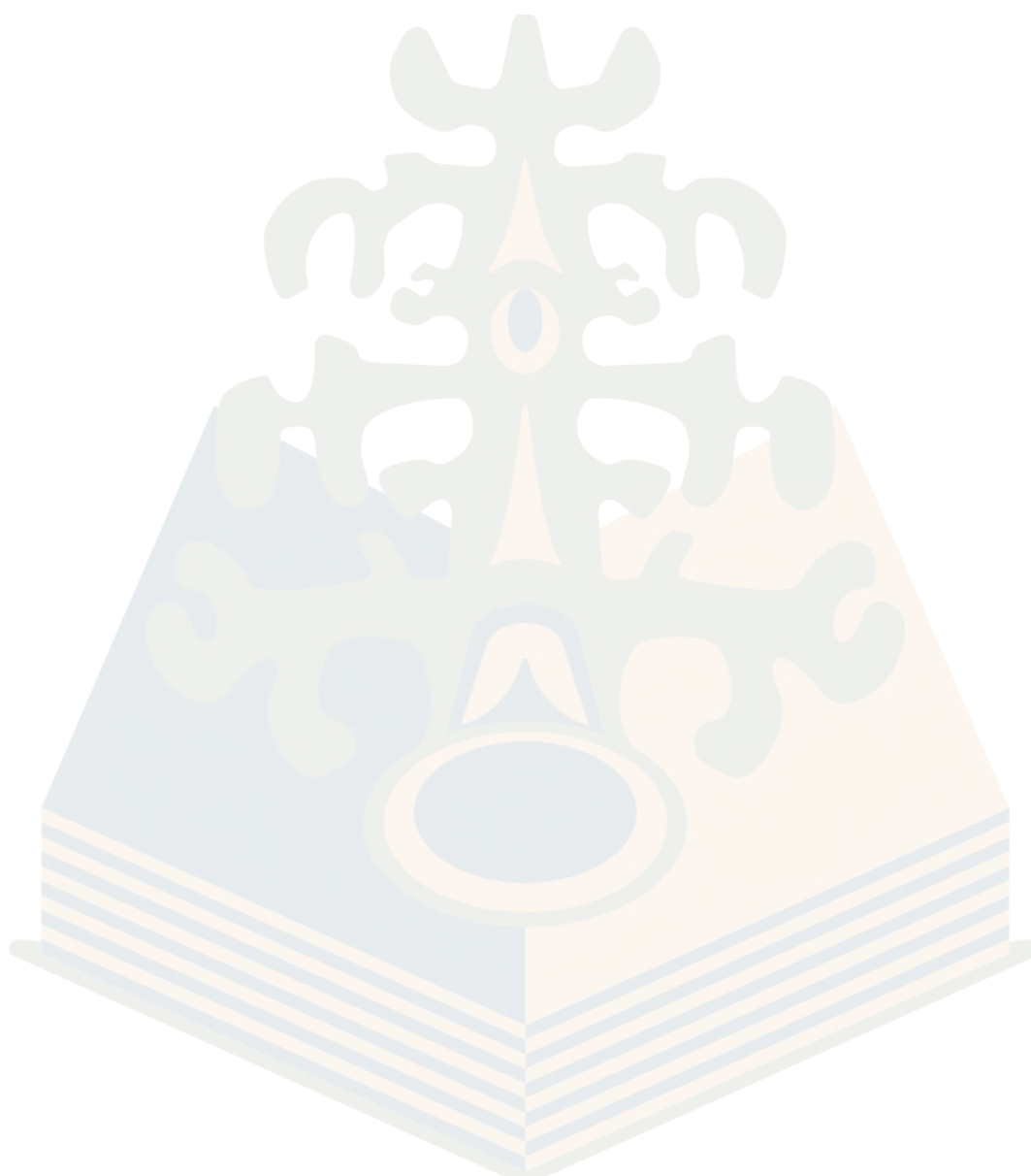


In 2023-2024, the VNFC

- **Provided 594,632** points of service
- **Served 120,000** meals and snacks from the VNFC kitchen
- **Sheltered 207** unhoused community
- **Created 5,400** Hampers, supporting 1,200 people with 21,600 meals and snacks
- **Contained 7,000 plus** Indigenous-specific resources in the Bruce Parisian Library
- **Offered 78 units** of safe and affordable housing for Indigenous Community on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish People
- **Contributed \$9 million** in wages, salaries, and professional fees to the community
- **Cared for 55** Indigenous children in our daycare

Administration Department Programs

Intake Reaching Home Community Entity



VNFC Intake

Respectfully submitted by April Gallicano, Intake Worker

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



VNFC Intake is the onboarding hub for the organization. For any community member that want to connect with VNFC's resources, their journey starts with an intake appointment.

Intake Team:

April Gallicano – Intake Worker

Highlights:

- 1480 people went through the intake office this year, varying from youth to elders, and professionals to community members.
- The highest demands for services are Housing Supports, Career Employment & Education Resources, Mental Health Supports, Hamper Program, and Family Services.
- Continuity of staffing has created a sense of stability for community members that return to the intake office, as well as providing an opportunity to build relationships, allowing them to feel more comfortable.
- Every community member is encouraged to come to the VNFC weekly Community Soup Lunch, wellness offerings, and any other events to help facilitate community member connections with the larger community that gathers at VNFC. Being connected with the VNFC and its programs, events, and services allows community members to broaden their support network and their connections to the Urban Indigenous Community with the Lekwungen Territory.
- Networking with outside agencies and organizations has been a crucial step forward for intake in the 2023/2024 fiscal year. This as allowed the intake worker to overcome obstacles when internal programs and services are either closed for intake or do not exist, and involves learning about external organizations and educating them on the VNFC services, allowing us to streamline our referral process.

Challenges:

- The largest challenge that intake faces is waitlists and internal programs being at capacity. This is the main reason why it is vital for the intake worker to network with other community organizations to ensure the VNFC Intake Office can still meet the community's needs.
- A connected challenge is when external resources are also at capacity. Although it is a priority to keep close contact with the organizations we make the most external referrals to, information gets out of date within a matter of months, weeks, or days. A situation the VNFC tries to avoid is sending a community member to a different organization, and them not being able to get the support they need or want.

- Since funding changes so frequently, we have lots of community members that inquire about programs we have offered in the past, which can create a negative experience for the community members that are seeking what they may have received in the past.
- Bus fare is the most requested resource which we cannot meet the community's needs for. Although we have multiple departments that can support community members with monthly bus passes, intake can only offer two bus tickets a month, which is the equivalent to one day pass.
- Intake capacity is another challenge for this role. Since intake is only open for three hours a day, it can take some time to meet with the intake worker during the busiest times of year. During the slow season, which are the summer months, people can usually have a same day intake appointment. During the busy seasons, September to March, it can take up to 7-10 business days to hear back from VNFC intake.
- Since there is only one intake worker, coverage is a challenge for when the intake worker is away. Although we have staff volunteers that can provide coverage, they do not know the same number of resources as the usual intake worker, or the same amount of information about internal resources VNFC offers.

Highlights for the Upcoming Year:

- The Intake office is developing a new training process and are hoping to train at least one person from each team to ensure there is coverage when needed.
- The Intake office is also streamlining the intake process to make it as easy as possible. This will also ensure the VNFC continue to meet the community's immediate needs.
- The Intake Office is organizing and updating the resource catalogue. This includes getting rid of all out-of-date resources and creating a centralized resource list full of current information.
- The Intake Office is continuing to connect with other community organizations to network with one another for the benefit of the urban Indigenous community. With this, intake is also accessing new resources, such as 811 or Pathways, to help guide our community members towards other resources that are beneficial for them.

“It has been an honour to help support community members as they connect with the resources they want and need, regardless of if the program is offered through Victoria Native Friendship Centre or through a different organization.”



Indigenous Reaching Home Community Entity

Respectfully submitted by Karryn Hall BFA

Indigenous Reaching Home Senior Program Administrator



Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

Indigenous Reaching Home is a federally funded program by Infrastructure Canada (INFC). Catrina Stensen is our EPO (Engagement & Program Officer) who works for Community Engagement and Service Delivery Community Policy and Programs Branch at INFC.

VNFC received the Indigenous Reaching Home contract from the CRD in March of 2022. At that time there were 3 Partner Project (PP) contracts (Our place, ACEH, and VNFC Siem Lelum) Our Place cancelled their contract the month we received the funding. ACEH and VNFC remain under contract with VNFC CE.

VNFC is a Community Entity for the Indigenous Reaching Home stream. The other streams on Vancouver Island are the Designated Community Stream, which the CRD is the Community Entity, and the Rural and Remote stream on Vancouver Island is run by Prince George FC. There are also Community Entities in Cowichan Valley and in Nanaimo, both administered by United Way.

VNFC CE Reaching Home has an Indigenous Community Advisory Board (ICAB), the board is comprised of up to 10 Indigenous folks from Greater Victoria who work for various organizations like Mustard Seed, MNBC, Pacifica, Our Place, Cool Aid, Makola Housing, etc. Their role is to advise us who they would like to see funded based on the proposals submitted, to offer advice and guidance about the Directives and where they would like the VNFC CE to focus on.

The directives are set by INFC, but the percentage of priorities are led by the ICAB. The list of directives is as follows:

Housing Services: *“Housing services are those that lead to an individual or family transitioning into more stable housing that has been deemed appropriate and safe.”*

Prevention and Shelter Diversion: *“Prevention includes activities aimed at preventing homelessness by supporting individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness before a crisis occurs.”*

Client Support Services: *“Client support services include individualized services to help improve integration and connectedness to support structures, such as the provision of basic needs and treatment services. They may also include services to support the economic, social and cultural integration of individuals and families.”*

Capital Investments: *“Capital investments are intended to increase the capacity or improve the quality of facilities that address the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or*

at imminent risk of homelessness, including those that support culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous individuals and families.”

Coordinated Access: *Coordination of resources refers to Project activities that may include:*

- (1) costs associated with becoming an access point for Coordinated Access System*
- (2) fees to cover training/paying staff to support the implementation of a culturally safe process, such as PATHS, to accompany the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)*
- (3) supporting the alignment of the Homeless Management Information System (HIFIS) to be culturally safe with the inclusion of Indigenous data sovereignty while complying with federal coordinated access requirements.*

In the summer of 2022, we put out a call for proposals, and the number of contracts went up to 14. The graph below shows which organizations received funding.

ACEH: Advocacy and Systems Improvement
VNFC SIEM LELUM: Siem Lelum/Fernwood House
VNFC HOUSING: Ts'ewut Lelum/Homeless Prevention Supports
VNFC HOUSING: Ts'ewut Lelum: Outreach Support Worker
BEACON: Indigenous Outreach for Youth
OASIS: Integrated Recovery and Holistic Wellness
QOM QEM: Outreach & Housing Support Program
BRIDGES: Indigenous Bridging Program
ACEH: Wellness House Project
IMFCSS: Housing Support Program
SOLID: Housing Outreach
THRESHOLD: Youth Housing
VNFC: Traditional Medicines & Food Security
PACIFICA: Indigenizing Pacifica Housing Outreach Services

The Projects in blue are ones we inherited from the CRD, and were 24-month contracts. The Projects in white were for 18 months, and the highlighted projects were the last to join and went for 12 months. These contracts ended on March 30, 2024.

We recently received our new 4-year contract with INFC which makes the combined total (with our last 4-year contract) around 9 million over an 8-year span.

The latest call for proposals was concluded last month and these are the new contracts.

PP ORG.	
IRH2024-02 ACEH	
IRH2024-03 VNFC Properties	
IRH2024-06 Oasis	
IRH2024-07 Qom Qem	
IRH2024-11 IMFCSS	
IRH2024-12 SOLID	
IRH2024-13 Threshold	
IRH2024-16 VNFC Garden	

Each quarter, APR-MAY-JUNE (Q1) / JULY-AUG-SEPT (Q2) / OCT-NOV-DEC (Q3) / JAN-FEB-MAR (Q4) we receive claims, via SYNC (a drop box type storage system) from our Partner Projects, 30 days after the end of each Quarter. These claims include:

- a claim form,
- a general Ledger /Income Statement from their Finance Office,
- a claim summary form,
- a gift card tracker and
- an FPE (Forecast of Expenditures for the coming Quarter).
- Plus, all projects are encouraged to upload their receipts, and at the very least are expected to have all receipts for expenses ready in case of audit from the VNFC CE, or INFC) receipts from expenses,

After I have processed the project claims, I create invoices for VNFC Finance accounts payable, and they pay our projects via direct deposit.

I then use those numbers to create the VNFC CE claim which we send to INFC 60 days after the last day of the Quarter. Then INFC sends VNFC CE an advance payment based on my FPE we send to them.

Our VNFC in-house projects are:

1. VNFC Housing & Properties run by Raelene Curry, who reports to Stacy Bauer and;
2. VNFC Garden run by Julie Parrell who reports to Christina Kante who reports to Grey Showler

Part of the VNFC CE funding is portioned out to include meaningful collaboration with the CRD regarding projects like HIFIS and Coordinated access in Greater Victoria. We have built a strong relationship with our Counterparts at the CRD and have been approach to present Nationally on how we have achieved such a solid working relationship and progress made. Jerry Michael, and Karryn Hall (with support from Katherin Cooper) will host a plenary session at an upcoming Reaching Home forum on April 18th & 19th. We also presented on this topic, in March at the National Indigenous Coordinated Access lead Conference.

Reaching home continues to grow and change annually. VNFC CE is committed to maintaining a position of leadership in the national Reaching Home Program. We are grateful for the support of the VNFC and from our Board of Directors.

Early Childhood Supports Programs

Aboriginal Infant Development Program

Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program

Indigenous Speech Language Pathology

Neurodiversity

Xa Xe STELIT̓KE-Ł Headstart Program



Aboriginal Infant Development Program

Respectfully submitted by Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



The AIDP Department has been very busy and for a large percentage of this reporting period only had a manager and one AIDP consultant who doubled as ACIS's cultural worker.

Program Team:

Kari-Ann Leadbitter – Director of Early Childhood Support Services

Jenn Leonard – Manager AIDP

Maria Sampson – AIDP Consultant and Cultural Support Consultant

Brandy Rice-LaFortune – AIDP Consultant

Highlights of This Reporting Period:

- Due to AIDP only having one consultant most of the year the focus has been finding employees and training them.
- Due to having a new manager AIDP Consultant our waitlist will be cut in half by September.
- AIDP has continued to have a strong relationship with our ECD program and works with them weekly helping new mothers and children.
- We have been able to get into community and start rebuilding connection. We expect to be able to take on more files this upcoming year.

Statistics:

Active files	30
Waitlist	30

Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program

Respectfully submitted by Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

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 – Director of Early Childhood Supports

Jordan Stewart - Program Administrator

Bianca Gomes - ASCD Manager

Mariel Macasaquit - ASCD Consultant

Mercedes Williams – ASCD Trainee

Hannah Munro – ASCD Consultant

Tera Domeli– ASCD Consultant

Highlights of This Reporting Period:

- ASQ Training – Ages and Stages training for clients
- Partnered with Jay's Care to allow children learn team building and have fun
- Consultants in person observations at Daycares, Out-of-school care settings
- Attended two in-person conferences for professional development and networking opportunities.
 - Inclusive Child Care Toolkit Implementation
 - Indigenous Safety Training – safety within Indigenous community

Statistics:

Active files 50

Waitlist 52

We have a fairly new team but currently all our ASCD positions are full!

As part of our commitment to community partnerships, we teamed up with the Toronto Blue Jays and helped teach children how to play baseball. The more important learning was working together in a fun and active way.

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 new 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.



Indigenous Speech Language Pathology

Respectfully submitted by Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



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

Kari-Ann Leadbitter – Director Early Childhood Supports

Highlights

- Staffing update: Caitlin has been on Maternity leave since the end of 2023.
- 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 Spring 2024.
- 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 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.

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 are going to have a drop in ISLP group in the evening for parents on the waitlist to get together and get as much support as we can provide while we are short staffed.

Neurodiversity

Respectfully submitted by Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports

Reporting Period: 2023/2024 extended to July



The Neurodiversity department had been vacant since the beginning of 2024.

Program Team:

Kari-Ann Leadbitter – Director of Early Childhood Support Services

Tamar Taylor – Neurodiversity Key Worker

Highlights of This Reporting Period:

- Worked with family to access needs and get them the assistance they needed.
- A few of our families have been supported with reminders and transport to FASD assessments at QA and are nearing to completion of their assessments. The Key Worker has been accompanying caregivers and their children to appointments to support them in understanding the assessments and encouraging engagement in the process.
- Maintaining connections with caregivers throughout the summer has included collaboration surrounding routine development, behavioural supports and return to school planning. The Key Worker has provided numerous resources to families and has been meeting with families to support them in implementing new strategies and routines.
- Participated in the Jay's Care Training and had children attend the program.

Statistics:

Active files	9
Waitlist	15

Xa Xe STELITKEL Head Start

Respectfully submitted by Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



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

Director of Early Childhood Supports/Manager of Daycare– Kari-Ann Leadbitter

Team Leads- Christina and Sue-Ann

Knowledge Keepers- Sharon and Eileen

Garden Support- Mr. Organic (Dave Friend)

Infant Team – Sue Ann, Lina, Fe, Sam, Tash

Toddler Team – Yuko, Makoto, Yasmine, Tristan, Eliza

3-year-old Team – Jordan, Emma, Janessa

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

Vacant Manager position

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 in difficult conversations and prevention of lateral violence.
- ASQ Training made available.
- Early Years Conference made available.
- 5 staff members were supported to upgrade there ECE certifications.

Updates of This Reporting Period:

- Our waitlist is currently full, and we are prioritizing Indigenous Children as an Aboriginal Head Start Program
- We currently have a SLP come to the daycare to work with all the children to enhance their speech. We also have children who attend ISLP/SLPs to have 1-1 speech support
- The Conservatory of 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 parents. 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	55
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Feel Goods:

- We will be partnering with the Elders and Language programs to have more Elders/Children engagement and have speakers join the classroom to help teach our children.

Family Development & Food Security Programs

Awakening the Warrior Within

Awakening the Woman Warrior Within

CEER Team

Early Childhood Development

Family Services Team

Hamper Program

Jordan's Principle

Kitchen

Young Warriors

Youth Department

Awakening the Warrior Within

Respectfully submitted by Glenn Patterson, Family Violence Project Coordinator

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



During this reporting period, we completed sessions, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, and 70 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 circle, August 15 to August 31, this was our sixth year 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.

Session 65, included an “INIPI” (sweat lodge ceremony) for our participants, some of the topics covered included lateral violence and that “we should care for one another”

Session 66, topics included, mysogeny, stealing/theft, grief and loss, anger/resentment, hate/frustration. We were visited during this session by representatives from the Dudes Clubs and the South Island Indigenous Authority.



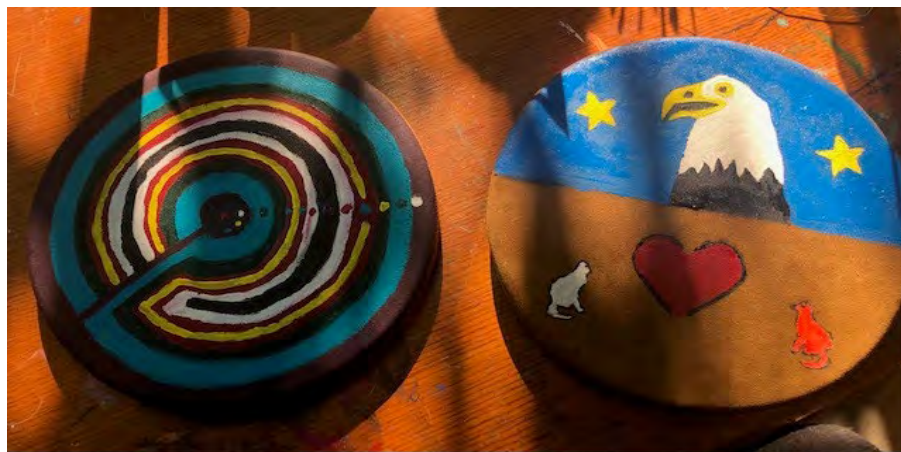
2023 WIWAYANGWACIPI Sundance Ceremony in Merritt BC This was our 8th year, bringing community members and several VNFC staff to a Sundance Ceremony on the Coldwater Indian Reserve near Merritt BC. We have found this annual ceremony to be an important part of helping our clients and Urban Native community members to reconnect with culture, even if not their own traditional teachings, the path to self awareness is demonstrated.

Session 67 included a leather crafting session, medicine pouches, moccussins, vests and hand bags. We were visited by Chris Jim from the South Island Indigenous Authority. He was asking for input from our men in the program as to how we can practice traditional care for our children and families.

Session 68, topics included Truth and Reconciliation, sexual violence against women and basic stress.

Session 69 of the Awakening the Warrior Within commenced on November 21, 2023, 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.

Session 70, topics covered, communication, families, act or react, stress, violence against women, and male privilege.



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.



Gratitude and thanks to VNFC, particularly our fine cooking staff, Carrie, Earl, and Ava. 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



Sharon Marshall
Co-facilitator
Men's Warrior Program

Awakening the Woman Warrior Within

Respectfully submitted by Julie Bell, Women's Warriors
Facilitator

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

Team members:

Julie Bell, Program Coordinator/Facilitator

New Assistant hired Natalie Legarde. Feb/2024.



This year, we had two Veteran Elders support Bug out training for natural disaster preparedness. We also had self-defence classes and a regular-Anti human trafficking training component. This was Sundance attendance two, Eagle Society and Four Directions.

In addition, we had the Rueben George family ceremony invitation to Sundance, Sweat, pipe, Society, Carry the Kettle Sundance.

Other ceremonies included Water Ceremony, Waterfall ceremony, Women sweats, pipe ceremonies, brushing off, as well as inner child ceremony for grief and violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Collaborative connections were made with Tears of Hope and Ontario Native Women's Association.

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 Facilitator has built an Indigenized program platform with noted elders in consultation. Formulating a program to address M.M.I.W.G.2S+ as an essential service provided. Service delivery was in a four-direction medicine circle understanding. Indigenization of program was to follow seasons as our Ancestors in ceremony. We have incorporated a winter ceremony from Sundance Teachings of four days of sweat and fast.



We have Elders for mentorship of Facilitators and participants. These Elders assist in preparing participants in ceremony attendance. This adds to a great enhancement to participants safety and healing.

Our greatest movement was witnessing Elder Muriel Pete and husband dancing, and Facilitator was granted by Sioux-Elder to pour for Women's Sweat. Facilitator will dance this year at Rueben George Sundance in Sept/2024. Facilitator will continue to sit with several different elders learning to pour sweat lodge and vision quest. Facilitator was Blanketed by Dwayne Gladue to be in leadership role, and it is vital to continue personal growth and development in a reconciliation process culturally reclaiming one's own culture. In Sacred Circle, healing is mirrored by development in self-restorative ceremony that brings Indigenization of a program.



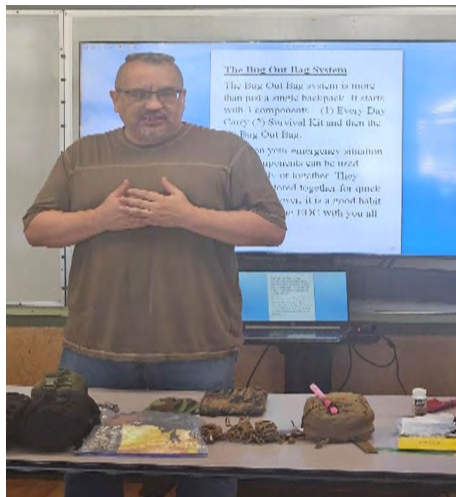
This spring, a segment of new life will be developed by a Cultural Elder, N'kixwstn James of Lytton First Nations, Veterans and Residential school survivor, teacher at UBC. N'kixwstn James is 47 yrs Sundancer- lead grandmother, can give pipes, and names. Facilitator will work with N'kixwstn on gown to dance in and receive more teachings. The circle will benefit on many levels of growth in role modeling, mentoring. 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 per

week is dedicated to Art; we made ribbon skirts for Ribbon Skirt month. We made sweat gowns for a sweat we will be attending, and moccasins. Our ending ceremony is focused on honoring the work everyone did as a feast is served to the participants.

Facilitator was given by creator a ceremony for missing, survivors, murdered, family members. This is with inner child work with native dolls in red ceremony regalia. This is my inner true child, and all M.I.M.G.W.2S+ that assist with addressing and validating complex grief that has impacted all communities. This represents intergenerational trauma from grandmothers, mothers and all that lives within. Deaths last year are four who participated

and 10 known female family members from violence-toxic drug supply. This will be all documented in new stats system that was developed for our program.

We have developed a new physical aspect component from accessing funding through S.S.S.D.I. application process and have a Self defense- Bug out – Anti-human trafficking component – gym and training sessions. We have remarkable success and attendance in these areas and a large consensus of wanting a continuation in program.



This past month, we have officially hired new assistant Natalie Legarde from Thunder Bay Ontario; Ojibway & Cree, and we welcome her help.

Natalie says: “Hello/Tansi,

It is an honor and privilege to serve in this capacity the Lekwungan People, known today as the Songhees and Xwsepsum, as well as the Coast Salish Nations. I am of Ojibway and Cree descent from Nipigon, Ontario, and from matriarchal lineage. My family relocated to the beautiful city of Victoria just prior to the pandemic. My family comes from a long lineage of leadership in our traditional territories of Ontario. In Gratitude”

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 (Victoria Native Friendship Centre) 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.

Waterfall ceremony was successful, for most participants fully participated.

Traditional Ribbon skirts made with purpose and teachings with our participants to celebrate April, ribbon skirt month.



All participants made Sweat gowns. They were made with the intention of and the purpose to attend multiple sweat lodge ceremonies. Our sister's society attended a four-day sweat coming into our participants and Elder that attended the final Sweat Lodge ceremony.

We receive referrals from in-house at VNFC, Transition Houses, Ministry of Children and Families, Bridges, and self-referrals. A lot of referrals have been online and other participants. We have an intake process that ensures the applicant is a fit for the program, and the program is a fit for the applicant.

Feedback from Participants:

"I met a positive group of sisters that I can heal with. I learned more about myself In 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 support my family, community, Juie identified me in leadership role, and I found confidential support in sisters circle, so grateful to have someone take care of me for a bit."

"I love the gym offerings and self defense classes taught by James Elder warrior."

"This circle is what I needed, not western society structure, our restorative process in connecting, learning new ways, and ceremony."

"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...."

"Being with other sisters from other nations but realizing that we were meant to support one another."

"Julie has a great positive energy and is a great listener. Her empathy is a treasure. She is respectful and has healing medicine in her. Julie has a good spirit."

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 an effective way. I can feel the intergenerational healing from having sister's circle that represents our inherent way of being, I see how we can together build a safer, stronger, community together, unified for a greater purpose in positive actions. As Lead Facilitator, every sister lost from our circle is one too many and we move forward together in Unity.

The gifting of a Pendleton blanket for end of time spent here at Victoria Native Friendship Centre sharing all her wisdom and teachings. Sister's who will attend Sundance this summer are well prepared.

Thank you to Victoria Native Friendship Centre for this gift.



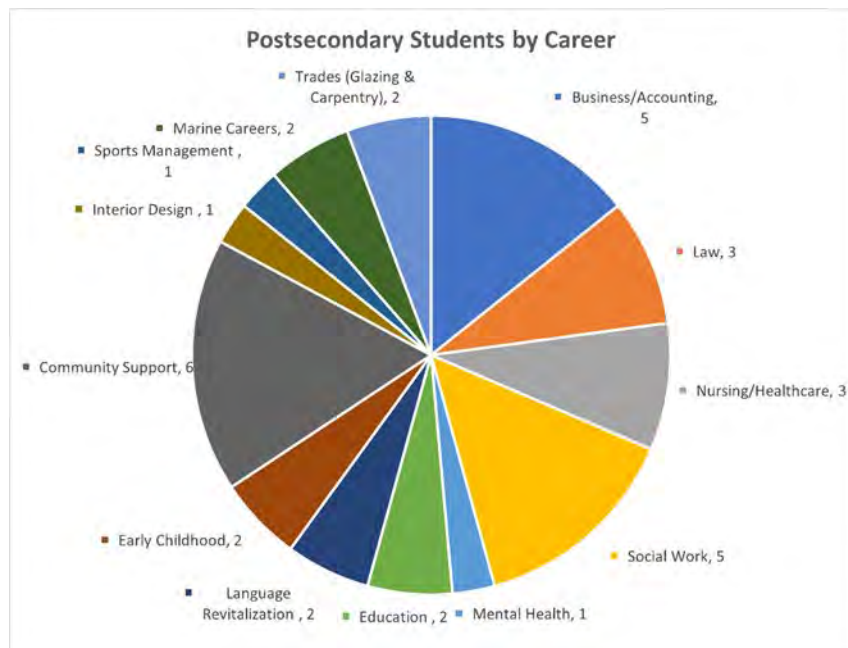
Postsecondary Education

Funding for Trades, Certificates, Diplomas, and Degrees

Over the course of 2023-24, our CEER team funded and supported 36

postsecondary students in a broad range of programs, from bookkeeping to interior design to Indigenous law. Supports provided include funding for tuition & books, scholarship resources, connections to other VNFC programs, and guidance when challenges arise. We also hosted sponsored students at our Fall Postsecondary Open House

and CEER Holiday Party. We continue to be uplifted and inspired by our sponsored students who are charging new paths for themselves, their families, and their home communities.



Success Story: Sponsored Student for Indigenous Community Wellness Certificate



“It is with huge gratitude, thankfulness and appreciation that I would like to acknowledge CEER for their funding to support my return to school. This gift has allowed me to walk in a new way of strength and confidence. Going back to school not only gave me the credentials to find a better job, and establish a footing in life to build a strong foundation for my family with stability and security, but it gave me reconnection. Connection to culture, my culture, language, life and those around me. I have built meaningful relationships within personal ways and within communities that I will be able to bring forward in workplace. Nia:wen”

-Catherine G.

Group Trainings and Certifications

Funded courses for skills development and industry recognized certificates

This year, we were proud to host a number of group trainings, including multiple driver's L test prep courses, three Microsoft Office Level 1 courses, and a two-day workshop on Indigenous Financial Literacy (Journey to Empowerment). We also sponsored community members for First Aid, Foodsafe, Serving It Right, forklift, and traffic control person/flagging certifications, as well as N driving lessons. With these newly gained skills, community members were able to boost resumes and parlay the experiences into new jobs, promotions, and lifelong learning.



Participants from the Indigenous Financial Literacy Journey to Empowerment workshop series



Studying hard for the driver's L knowledge course



Happy graduate of the Microsoft Office Level 1

1:1 Career Development

Individualized support from experienced Career Guides

On top of all of the programming that we offer, it is important to highlight the good work that our CEER staff are doing with individual community members. This is where deep meaningful conversations happen around where a community member has come from, what challenges they are facing today, and where they would like to go with their career and life as a whole. This year, we have increasing intersections between our work in employment services and with housing, food security, mental health, and family reunification. As we partner across departments at VNFC and with other organizations on ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ territories, we cherish the important role that CEER plays in supporting well-being.

Success Story: Young Father Working Towards Sustainable Employment

"I am currently getting my life on the right path for me and my family and I appreciate all the programs at VNFC as well as the CEER Department has to offer. I'm currently trying my best to get my family back together and to strive to be a better father for my son and wife. The CEER Department has helped me get a few tickets like serving it right, First Aid and food safe. They also did a great job at helping with my Resume, computer time and general knowledge about the work force and helpful programs. Having resources and great staff to help me towards that goal has been a blessing and I am very grateful. Snacks, bus tickets, gift cards, driving lessons and general kindness has also helped a lot. I might not of turned my life around if it weren't for all the helpful members of VNFC. So on behalf of my small family and My son who is too young to say thanks.

Thank You, keep up the good work and support as it goes a long way in the road we call life, towards a better future and to all in need."

-Tyler O.



1:1 Career Transition Support

Supporting mid-career professionals find new career paths

Through our Employment, Life Skills & Training (ELST) program funded by BCAAFC, we continue to do good work helping community members who are mid-career upskill and ladder into new roles. This past year, despite having only two frontline staff, we served 100+ community members through our ELST program, and an additional 150+ community members through our CSETS program.

Success Story: Professional Cook Becoming a Boat Captain



The first position I had was working on a boat outside of Gold River and cooking for the crew of 10 to 12 crew members that worked for Diversified Marine which is the company I worked for. I enjoyed the boat and the life on the water. I looked into other courses that I required for my next steps for working with coast guard and BC ferries and for becoming a 60 tonnage boat captain. I selected courses for my time off as I was on a 2 week on and 2 week off rotation. I completed course work over the next 3 or 4 months on my time off from the boat. Then the boat went into dry dock and I had time off while in dry dock. I went back into kitchen life on land although I missed working on the water. I pursued more course work to complete my 60 tonnage captain ticket and just in this last few months I did chartwork and navigation to finish it off. And now I'm close to completion of all the requirements for the 60 tonnage captains ticket. I still have to get 2 months of sea time and a marine medical exam and finally an oral exam with Transport Canada to complete the training and officially get my captain's ticket.

This journey started back in 2021 and now it is 2024. With the dedication to work towards my goal I did coursework slowly and passed it along the way over the years. I am glad to have this skill set now and look forward to being on the water again soon.

Early Childhood Development Team

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Mabee, BSW, Director of Family Development and Food Security

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



ECD STAFF:

Rebecca M.	Program Manager
Delwyn P.	Family Support Worker
Mandy G.	Family Support worker – retired February 2024
Tree H.	Family Support Worker – started in March 2024

CAPC STAFF:

Marsha C.	CAPC/Family Support
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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:

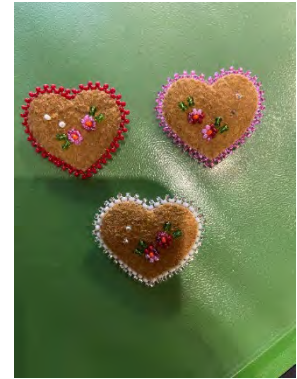
- To provide urban Indigenous parents/caregivers with access to information and resources pertaining to pregnancy, birth, infancy, parenting, FASD prevention, and available resources to support families in their efforts to raise healthy children.
- To educate Aboriginal parents, parents-to-be, foster 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 Indigenous 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 SXEXINE.

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



ECD this year

We had a wonderful year full of creativity, laughter, and new babies. 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, childcare, health, grief, loss, anxiety, depression, and life joys. We enjoy bringing the group to Siem Lelum each Tuesday.

During the year:

- Infant massage
- Pelvic Floor Health workshop
- Speech Therapist Visits
- Sage spray and bath salts workshop with our Juli and garden team
- Goldstream field trip
- Bannock and Jam making
- Made Ribbon skirts
- Loom beading bracelets
- Beaded Christmas bulbs
- Ribbon Stockings
- Wool weaving
- Beaded rings
- Beaded lanyards
- Bucket Hats





Bada Jeen - Completed mural in our space



Our Canoe team – National Indigenous Peoples Day



Goldstream Field Trip



Indigenous Youth and Family Liaison – School District 61

Staff: Shiloh U. – Esquimalt Highschool

Kiera N. - Quadra Elementary and Shoreline Middle School

We are happy to have returning staff Shiloh and new staff Kiera supporting students within School District 61. As non-teaching staff the liaisons provide support services to Urban Indigenous youths and their families at the assigned schools.

Thank You.

Partnerships

Finally, we would like to thank our funders, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society (CSETS) and the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), for their support. We also owe gratitude to our many partners:

- WorkBC
- John Howard Society of Victoria
- Roundtable Consulting
- Camosun College
- University of Victoria
- Pacific Rim Early Childhood Institute
- Alert First Aid
- Roadmasters Safety Group
- Total Support Solutions
- Responsible Service BC
- Drivewise
- Serge's Real Life Driving School
- Mark's Work Warehouse
- KMS Tools
- Greater Victoria Harbour Authority
- Terra Remote Sensing
- Chandos Construction

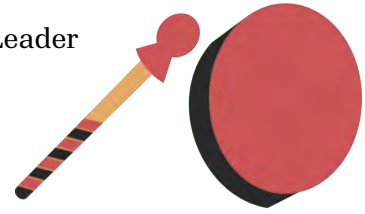
Looking forward

This year marks a transition for our team, as our long-time lead Nadia Salmaniw moved on at the beginning of 2024. We hold gratitude and warmth for her eleven years of service at VNFC. The team is being joined by three new wonderful and talented team members, as we look forward to learning together, growing capacity, and writing the next chapter of CEER.

Family Services Team

Respectfully submitted by Brenda Freeman, Family Services Team Leader

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



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 raising their families on.

FST believes in assisting Urban Indigenous Families and individual through a balanced approach by empowering them with their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing journey.

Family Services Team Staff:

Arianna Scott, Manager of Family Service & Jordan's Principle
Brenda Freeman, BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team
Temidayo Ajidasile, Social Worker
Trina Minshall, Family Support Worker
Erin Monahan, Family Support Worker – currently on leave

New Staff:

Erin Monahan started April 24, 2023
Temidayo Ajidasile stated Aug. 8, 2023
Arianna Scott Manager of Family Service and Jordan's Principle Sept. 6, 2023

Practicum Student:

Temidayo Ajidasile Student from University of Manitoba; Bachelor Social Work from May 8th to July 26, 2023, and Sept to Dec. 2023

Crystal Young Student from University of Victoria: Bachelor of Social Work from Jan. 8th to March 29th, 2024

Volunteering:

- Trina Minshall, Family Support Worker - Is involved in Occupational Health and Safety (OSH)
- Temidayo Ajidasile, Social Worker – involved with Victoria Family Court & Justice Community Open House
- Brenda Freeman BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team - Community Co-Chair for the Great Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee. June 2021- Present
- Brenda Freeman, BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team –Family Support Workers Network Meetings/Mental Health Network- March 2022- Present

Community Involvement:

The Family Services team meets weekly to discuss cases and provide supportive feedback and suggestions on moving cases forward to successful completion. The Family Services team attends workshops, conferences, and training that continue to build the skills of our team to meet the needs of our community members.

Guest Speakers/Workshops/Conferences

On various occasions all members of the Team completed the Community Learning Program of the VNFC, Gimme Shelter, and Renting it Right.

Throughout the year the FST volunteers at the VNFC Community Soup Lunch both as a team and in partnership with other teams or community organizations such as Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee.

The FST holds several team building and engagement sessions throughout the year both as a small team and as the larger department shared with Jordan's Principle.

The ongoing attendance of training is a vital part of maintaining a current and well-educated team during this fiscal year the FST attended trainings on such subjects as; Trauma informed practices, Domestic Violence, Survivors of sexual Abuse, Time Management, Lateral Violence, Tax Preparation, Suicide Intervention and Prevention, Vicarious Trauma, Building Better Boundaries, and other subjects.

The FST is committed to maintaining and building better community partnerships through information sharing sessions, and partner tours. Some of these session and tours were held with; Victoria Child Abuse Prevention & Counselling Centre, Victoria Family Court & Justice, BC First Nations Justice Council, Victoria Brain Injury Society, 1U-Victoria Single Parent Resource Centre, and Victoria Child Abuse Prevention & Counselling Centre.

The FST also actively engages in discussion and sessions to improve the overall sector this year the team attended; Social Sector Workforce Discussion, Social Work Oversight Engagement Validation Session, Mobilization for Child Welfare Systems, Child & Family Service Sector Workforce Plan, LFH Wise Practice and Community Building Day, CYSN Engagement Session, and Advancing Collaborative Decision-Making in Child Welfare.

The FST being part of the larger VNFC organization actively engages in collaborative activities within the center this included Strategic Planning Session, Department Sacred Circle, 2SLGBTQIA- Youth Gathering, and National Indigenous Peoples Day

Service provided for community:

10 Days of Secure Certificated of Indian Status (SCIS) were held at the VNFC led by the FST and supported by staff from other departments and volunteers at the VNFC. These 10 days of clinic provided support for Status card applications to 428 community members.

Family Services Team Goals:

The FST is mandated to advocate and provide supports for Urban First Nation Families/individual who are involved with the Ministry of Children and Families (MCFD). Our goal and dreams are to have Indigenous 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.

The FST provided 3443 points of service to our community members through case management, advocacy, case conferencing, administrative support to community members, referrals to both internal VNFC and external resources, transportation, and supportive attendance at appointments, court, case conferences, etc.

The FST refers community members to many different resources the most frequent referrals made were to a variety of counseling services such as addictions, FNHA, and the youth department, other frequent referrals include Health support workers, homeless support workers, group programs such as the Warriors programs, Career Employment and Education Resources, and VNFC Housing.

External referrals include Bridges for Women Society, John Howard Society, Burnside Gorge Community Association, and Quadra Village Community Center. The FST being largely invested in the success of the family unit as a whole also provides referrals to parenting classes at a variety of different organizations, aboriginal Early Intervention services, and legal supports.

The Family Service Team will continue assisting Indigenous Families through a balanced approach by empowering them with their physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing journey. The Family Service Team take advantage of many Self Care opportunities that are provided in the community by other agencies and/or VNFC.



Program Statistics:

The FST case load for the fiscal year of 2023/2024 included 204 files with 117 **active** (new intakes or returning client), 32 **inactive** (Haven't heard from their clients over a 3 Month) and 55 **closing files** (Haven't had contact within 6 months and closing letter is sent)

Monthly Case load: April 2023 to March 2024.

Months	# Clients	Male	Female	Status	No-Status
Total	308	184	230	212	28

Overall Achievements with clients

Supports In:	Success:	Supports In:	Success:
Visit: kids in MCFD Care	11	Child return: Parent(s)/Family	8
Child staying at Home	5	MCFD (closing)	4
Detox/ in and complete Treatment	3	Found Housing	5
Documents: legal, Indian Stats, PWD, Housing:	2	Education/Employment	2
Custody	2	Graduated Licensing	1

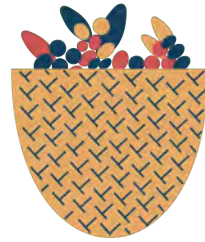


Hamper Program

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Johnathan Smith, Hamper Program Assistant
Brittany Davies, Volunteer



The Hamper Program continues to support over 1500 individuals, families, Elders, tenants at Siem Lelum 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.

Over the past year, Johnathan has continued to work hard and always has a smile on his face.

Brittany has been with the Hamper Program as a volunteer for a few years. She takes pride in her work. Whether it is putting together hamper or veggie bags or any other help required.

The VNFC is very lucky to have these dedicated workers.

In our hampers we provide one canned meat or fish, 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, pork, or sausages. We include a bag of fresh vegetables and bread. We have some community members who do not have access to basic cooking appliances, for these circumstances we have no-cook hamper options as well. Our amazing partners who help provide us with the supplies we need are Zambris restaurant, who provides tomato sauce, Farm and Field Butchers, Tilly's Galley provides soup and rice mixes, Island West Produce, Little Jam Stand provide us with jams and other canned sauces, Rainbow Kitchen and Cob's bread who donates bread and other baked goods.



STATS

From April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

Total Hampers: 1500

Total People Supported: 670

Hamper Program has sent out 1500 food hampers supporting 670 people. The hampers are given out twice a month for pickup and delivery.

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



Jordan's Principle

Respectfully submitted by Angela Heaton, Senior Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator



Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

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

Daniell Low - Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator

Mamatha Musini - Jordan's Principle Payments Coordinator

Arianna Scott – Manager of Family Services & Jordan's Principle

Highlights

- It has been a busy year for the Jordan's Principle Service Coordination team.
- There are 453 open files on the Jordan's Principle caseload.
- 21 files were successfully closed off of the Jordan's Principle caseload.
- 58 files were referred out to other agencies for case management due to capacity of the Jordan's Principle caseload.
- A Jordan's Principle Payments Coordinator was hired in June of 2023 allowing VNFC to be an ARC organization decreasing wait times family experience for payment of approved expenses.
- 306 new referrals were received.
- The Service Coordinators submitted 324 Individual requests to Indigenous Service Canada (ISC) for funding adjudication which is an increase in submissions of 112% since last fiscal year.
- Our funding request approval rate is 97%.
- The Service Coordinators submitted 10 Group requests that will benefit over 1200 children and youth in a variety of services from Dental to summer camp.
- There were over \$2,050,000 in approvals of products, services and supports for First Nations and Inuit children and youth.
- There were over \$2,550,000 in approved funds for group request.
- Notable approvals include:
 - Full time in-home childcare/nanny to assist single grandmother taking on the care of her three high needs grandbabies to prevent burnout and risk of children entering the child welfare system.
 - Group request for Physiotherapy to service 50 children within the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations.

- Group request for 4.3 SLP's for SD63 to provide additional speech and language therapy within the schools for 130 children.
- Group request for 375 children to receive funding for Pediatric Dental Care.
- Group request to support children attending TSAWOUT's Summer Culture Camp.
- Funding support for two high level youth athletes including travel, accommodation, training, competition, and equipment costs ensuring that the youth can continue to excel in their sport at the National level.
- Individual request for 1:1 EA in SD62 to support child with extra support needs' full participation and inclusion in school.
- Individual requests for emergency accommodations and rental support to safeguard children and their families from becoming street entrenched.

Events

- Esquimalt Nation- Halloween Open House- October 29th, 2023.
- Attended the Songhees Elders Lunch to provide a presentation on Jordan's Principle, connect with community members, and share resources.
- Attended the VNFC Health Care Fair and provided information to community members and service providers within the Greater Victoria Area.
- Bringing helpers Together 2023 – Service Coordinator Gathering – April 4th & 5th, 2023
- Caring Society Gala: Liability Concerns for First Nation: Prevention Services and Jordan's Principle – Oct 25th, 2023
- AFN Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator Gathering: Our Future, Our Children – March 5th-7th, 2024

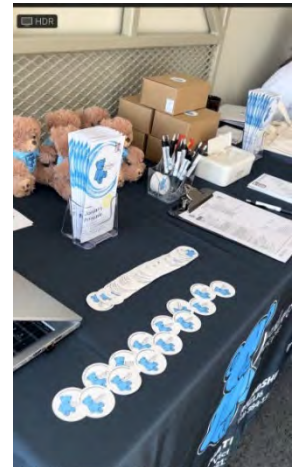
Challenges

- When referrals are transferred to Service Coordinators within BC that are unfamiliar with supports and resources in Southern Vancouver Island, this can cause disparities in the level of support families receive and can cause barriers in accessing approved funding.
- Indigenous Services Canada's backlog in processing payments has affected vendor relationships resulting in some vendors refusing to accept funding through Jordan's Principle. This has increased the amount of follow-ups with ISC payments and the amount of time and care our team is exerting to repair these relationships and rebuild trust with vendors.
- The high caseload and rate of new referrals resulted in capacity challenges. As of January 2024, most new referrals had to be transferred to BCACCS Service Coordination Hub to be reassigned to another Service Coordinator in BC with current capacity to assist.

- ISC continues to be backlogged with decisioning requests which results in lengthy delays for families and increased follow up for the Service Coordination team.
- Home renovation requests as they relate to the health and safety of children and youth have been denied by ISC and access to affordable and safe housing continues to be a challenge in our region.
- Payment for accommodations with hotels/Airbnb- as VNFC does not want to take the liability of the damages and the families not having credit card making it challenging to take over the payments for accommodations and need to pass the payments to ISC.
- Delays in ISC funding to cover already approved payments.
- Payment limitations causing delays in getting families and service providers payments.
- ISC backlogged payments effected the relationship with the service providers and regaining their confidence in receiving the payments in time.

Highlights for the Upcoming Year

- A Life Essentials group request has been discussed with ISC and submitted, which once approved, will allow us to provide life essentials such as groceries, baby supplies, clothing etc as they are needed without having to wait for ISC to decision individual files. This will improve access and ensure First Nations children and youth timely provision of essential needs.
- Given the high workload of the team, we have submitted an Expression of Interest for two additional Service coordinators as well as an additional ARC Administrator. A group request has also been submitted for two Jordan's Principle Social Workers to assist with files who require increased case management support. We are hopeful that Indigenous Services Canada will provide funding for expansion of the Jordan's Principle team.

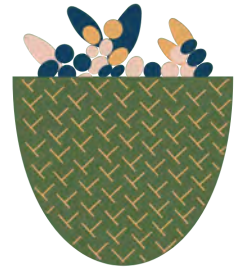


VNFC Kitchen

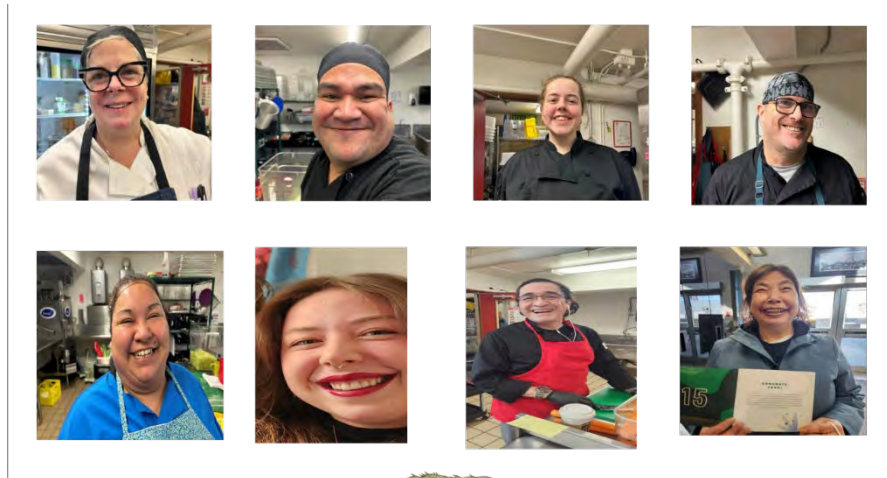
Respectfully submitted by Carrie Pollard, Executive Chef

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

The Victoria Native Friendship Centre kitchen staff are hard-working individuals who love to connect with community and spread love around through food. Each staff member has continuous opportunities to learn new skills in and outside of Kitchen programming through the VNFC Garden, Food Hamper, and Shelter Programs. Through food, Community is nourished physically, societally, and emotionally.



Left to Right: “Kitchenettes” Carrie Pollard (Executive Chef), Earl McCallum, Ava Pollard, Gerald Riviere, Genea Thomas, Brooklynn Bitze, Leonard Desjarlais, Carol Stocker



With our shelter opening year-round for the first time this past November, our weekly community soup lunch back on track, and ever-growing daily programming, the “Kitchenettes” have indeed been busy, serving over 120,000 meals and snacks this year.

Community members are eager to try more whole foods, dairy free, gluten free and vegetarian options. Our kitchen proudly offers these options with from-scratch meals using local ingredients when possible. We are fortunate to utilize organic produce from our own gardens. Throughout the season, we are gifted with a wide variety of greens, tomatoes, nettle, dandelion, herbs and yes, zucchini 😊. Several local farms also regularly donate nearly 1500 pounds of produce to the kitchen as well.

We have partnered with Turtle Island Coffee and are establishing relationships with local business to source more local meats, seafoods and coffee! Partnering with these companies assists in providing high-quality ingredients and helps battle of ever-rising food costs.

Our weekly community soup lunch numbers have doubled since restarting post- pandemic. Certainly, food security plays a part, yet as stated by VNFC Executive Director Ron Rice Wush'q, "It's about people gathering together as a community". Some of the Elders have this to say about soup lunch:



"I get to see old friends and share a meal"

"I'm having chemo, and the soup really helps me feel better"

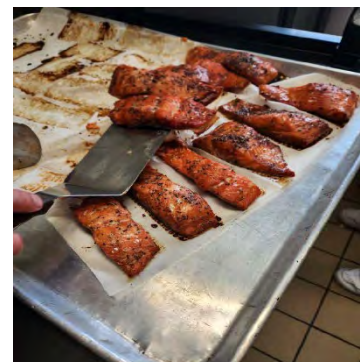
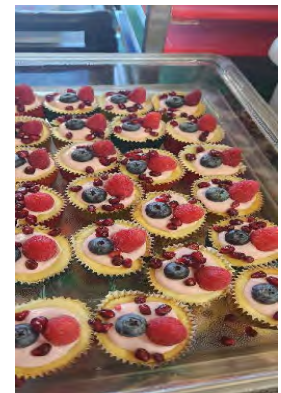
"I'm grateful for a hot lunch, I can barely afford to buy food"



We have a few new ideas and adaptations to provide for our growing numbers. We'll be creating sugar-free treats and experimenting with new soups and high-protein breakfast recipes.

We're always looking for new ways to expand the kitchen. With the shelter open year-round, we will have an extra 18,250 meals to make annually. Although we are grateful for our smooth-running system, we have run into a few issues. Our lack of space makes it nearly impossible to buy in bulk; buying bulk helps lower food costs, enabling us for example to provide more seafood, providing a more Indigenous approach to food. Wholesale prices have risen fast, a number of our appliances are showing their age, and we've outgrown others.

For me, feeding community is not just about feeding people, it's about people coming together, sharing experiences, learning from one another, making connections and taking home more than just leftovers. That's what fills me up!



Young Warriors

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Mabee, BSW, Director of Family Development and Food Security

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

Staff

William Smith Program Facilitator

Cecilia Williams Program 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:

- Identifying big and complex feelings
- How to cope with and express strong feelings in a healthy way
- Learning about Empathy

Bullying:

- Types of bullying
- Understanding why bullies act mean
- How to ask for help

Relationships and Boundaries

- Types of relationships we have with the people in our lives
- Healthy vs. unhealthy relationships
- Respecting the boundaries of others and expressing our own

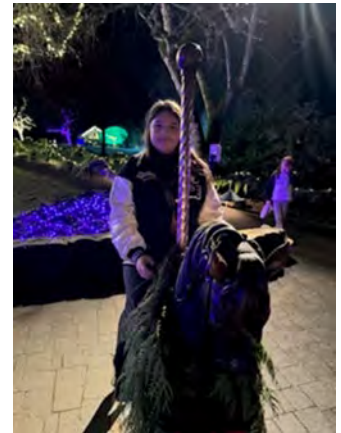
Health and Wellness:

The Medicine Wheel teachings

- Finding balance in our lives
- How to live a healthy lifestyle

Culture:

- Devils club beaded neckless (Activity lead by elder Jean Smith)
- Medicine Bags (Activity lead by Facilitators and accompanied by Jean Smith)



Young Warriors this Year

We provided the main program, a follow up program called Connections, spring and 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. To promote deeper connection, we offer a Monday afternoon, in person, drop-in. During the summer, we supported some of our older children transition to youth programming by joining the youth summer camps. We look forward to expanding the program in the coming year.

This year for Spring break from March 18th to March 28th 2024, we had a total of fourteen (14) participants join us through out the two weeks. During the Young Warriors spring break camp, we had some consistent and alternating youth attend. Each camp day consisted of six youth. For the spring break camp, we had access to an eight-passenger van. With two camp leaders that left six available seats for the youth to safely travel to each activity. Our Young Warriors had fun exploring the exciting activities we had planned for each day.

- Beacon hill petting zoo
- Beacon hill park
- Miniature world
- Bug zoo
- Museum
- Imax
- Shaw ocean discovery centre
- Lego exhibit at Sidney Museum
- Goldstream Park
- Movie / Kungfu panda 4
- Mini golf
- Play zone
- Gym, Sports day



Quotes from participants:

“I really enjoyed being on zoom.”

“I don’t want it to end can we still meet for sharing circles.”

“I’m really happy I got to meet all of you.”

(to Elder Jean) “Thank you for teaching about the medicine (devils club).”

“I enjoyed the sharing circle; I liked talking about my day.”



VNFC Youth Team Annual Report

Respectfully submitted by Kailyn Johnson, Manager of Youth and Community Leadership

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

Current Youth Team

Kailyn Johnson – *Manager of Youth and Community Leadership*

Marcus McCullough- *Youth Program Lead*

Aly Waddell – *Youth Support Worker*

Avery Nelson – *Youth Support Worker*

Claryssa Duerden – *Youth Support Worker*

Kat Waldron – *Youth Support Worker*

Sef Masalosalo- *RAVE Drop-in Co-Coordinator*

Sonia Prieto – *RAVE Drop-in Co-Coordinator*

Tony Cecchetti- *Climate Action Lead Coordinator (currently on Paternity Leave)*

Marilyn Gallic – *Indigemind Guide*



After Aly Waddell Stepped back from Manager of Youth Programs in August 2023, Kailyn Johnson stepped into the role of Youth Programs Lead. In February Kailyn Johnson stepped into the Manager of Youth and Community Leadership Team role. In April 2024 Marcus McCullough made a move internally from housing support worker into the Youth Program Lead role.

While Aly Waddell stepped back from Manager and reduced work hours she has continued to work as a one-to-one youth support worker one day a week. Sonia Prieto and Sef Masalosalo both joined the team in November 2023, as our Youth Drop-in coordinators.

Avery Nelson joined the team in January 2024 making a move internally within VNFC from the custodial team. Claryssa Duerden joined the team in January 2024 as a one-to-one youth support worker.

Kat Waldron joined the team in February 2024 as a one-to-one youth support worker.

Tony Cecchetti went on parental leave in February of 2023 from his role as Indigemind Guide. Marilyn Gallic Joined the IndigeMind Program in March 2023 in the role of IndigeMind Guide.

Revitalizing Youth Support: Building a Stronger Team

In 2023, our youth support team faced a significant transition as many members moved on to pursue new opportunities, leaving our team very bare-bones, however this challenge became an opportunity for growth and renewal. Through concerted efforts, we've successfully brought together a dynamic and diverse youth support team which leverages a variety of skills and strengths among our staff.

Despite not having formal funding for a youth addictions-specific role, we've embraced innovation and resourcefulness. Kat, a valuable member of our team, joined us with a wealth of knowledge gained from her experiences at Our Place and John Howard. Her background equipped her with insights and expertise crucial for connecting with youth grappling with substance-related issues.

Another invaluable addition to our team has been Avery, whose cultural knowledge and personal journey have enriched our programs in profound ways. As a former youth who accessed services at the VNFC (Victoria Native Friendship Centre), Avery brings forward an inherent understanding and dedication to our programs.

Avery's cultural insights have enhanced our ability to connect with and support youth from diverse backgrounds. By incorporating his perspective into our initiatives, we've been able to ensure that our services are culturally sensitive and relevant, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among the youth we serve.

Claryssa has been a beacon of support and positivity. Her enthusiasm for helping youth and her fresh perspective have injected new energy into our programs. Claryssa's dedication to making a difference in the lives of young people, and her contributions have been invaluable in our efforts to provide comprehensive support services. While we currently lack a formal role for brief services, Claryssa's infectious energy and adeptness at connecting with youth will enable the team to unofficially continue providing short-term support to those in need.

While Aly took a step back from her role, her continued presence one day a week has been instrumental in maintaining connections with the youth we serve. With years of experience on the team, Aly brings a wealth of knowledge and insights that have proven invaluable in guiding our efforts. Her commitment to the well-being of youth remains unwavering, and her ongoing contributions are a testament to her dedication to our mission.

Together, all of the members of the youth team have formed a cohesive unit dedicated to supporting youth in our community. Each member brings a unique set of skills and experiences to the table, enriching our programs and ensuring that we can meet the diverse needs of the youth we serve. We remain committed to fostering a supportive environment where every youth feels empowered to seek assistance and embark on their journey towards personal growth and well-being. With our strengthened team and unwavering dedication, we're confident in our ability to make a positive impact in the lives of the youth we serve.

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. Our youth support program is very individualized based on the desires and needs of each youth. YSW are guided by the youth they are supporting to assist guiding the youth with a variety of personal, educational, professional, health and other goals.

Common themes youth support workers 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, Gender-affirming care 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. Over the last year we have successfully been able to not only increase Drop-in hours we have also been able to include another day on the schedule. VNFC RAVE youth Drop-in currently runs Tuesday-Friday from 3:30 PM-8:00 PM!

This program focuses on promoting wellness for our youth through art, recreation, sports, cultural activities, life skills, community outings, and more! The youth have been enjoying the cooking nights which have included learning how to make fried rice, fry bread, edible flowers, and more! For cultural nights, we often do activities like medicine bag making, mini drum making, beading, plant medicine walks, and dream catcher making. Other recreational activities we have done this year included taking youth to escape the room, Axe throwing, playing basketball, baseball and soccer as well as the Butchart Gardens holiday light display.



RAVE Youth Spring Break Camp

During Spring Break, the drop-in team was able to run 2 weeks of day time programming for the youth. These two weeks were filled with learning, exploring and having fun! Some of the outings included, a day trip to Sidney Glass Beach and the Lego museum, Glen Lake Trout Release; where the youth were able to assist with releasing trout in the lake; and learn about fishing, Langford Lake Fishing Trip, A visit to Eagle Feather Gallery, Swimming day, building birdhouses and more!



Gathering Our Voices 2024 – Empowering Indigenous Youth



During Spring break, Claryssa and Avery had the pleasure of taking nine youth to the Gathering Our Voices (GOV) conference. The conference included traditional opening and closing ceremonies, skill-building workshops, events focused on enhancing youth confidence and fostering community, and many free resources! At these events, the youth had an opportunity to practice Indigenous protocol surrounding prayer, sharing of knowledge, and respect during cultural events.



The youth attended several workshops including a Slahal Tournament workshop, that took place in the Mungo Martin House and was accompanied by drumming and singing (Slahal is a traditional game played by the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast). The youth attended a workshop facilitated by Ocean Wise about land stewardship of our local oceans, as well as other workshops that covered topics such as the value of family and community, traditional governance, leadership, and using humour to heal trauma.

The youth who attended GOV had this to say:

“Seeing Notorious Cree perform and speak about his lived experience was inspiring”

“The workshops were very well planned and entertaining; I learned a lot”

“It was fun connecting with youth from other nations and cities”

“Starting my day off with drumming and singing in the Mungo Martin House was an amazing experience that made me feel grounded and connected with my culture and ancestors”

RAVE Youth Summer Camp

The Youth Department hosted six weeks of summer camps during the months of July and August. Youth were eager to participate, and the team hosted 25 youth during these weeks, with the hope to continually grow the number of youth who attend our summer programs in the years to come.



During our camps we were lucky enough to have our returning partner, MISCELLANEOUS Productions, attend for a special collaboration. MISCELLANEOUS brought facilitators including Street dance professionals, Youth Interns, a Theatre/Film director, and a professional Percussionist. Other activities our summer camp enjoyed included, Wild Play, Beach Days, Bike Repair Workshop, Rock Climbing, Butterfly Gardens, and Whale Watching.



Our summer camps have historically brought youth on a camping trip. This year we decided to try a new camping location with the youth. We went camping at Bamberton campsite. We had 8 youth join us on the camping trip! The youth spent time exploring the area around camp, playing games and doing crafts.



2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigequeer Programming



The 2024 2SLGBTQIA+ Gathering at VNFC was a highlight of the year for many – youth, staff and volunteers included. As soon as you walked into the Centre, the energy and excitement was felt. The youth team worked for months prior to the event, finding appropriate resource booths, cultural activities, a keynote speaker and vendors to attend. On the day of the event, we had over

140 youth and community organizations in attendance – the most participants we’ve ever had!

A huge highlight for many participants (staff and youth alike) was the keynote speaker – Chelazon Leroux aka “Auntie”. Auntie was a performer on season 3 of Canada’s Drag Race and brought life advice delivered with humour and shared their lived experience growing up as a two-spirit individual. The crowd engagement was incredible, and the dedication to answer as many crowd questions as possible was heart warming. Our team noticed that on most of the received feedback forms from the day’s events, Auntie was many participants’ favourite part!



Lunch was a catered feast of Indian tacos by the Bannock Room, which was also a highlight for many.

There was a variety of workshops around personal identity, goal setting, cultural crafts and cultural identity, all of which were full to the brim. On top of these workshops, we had a variety of booths in the hallways for the youth and participants to access resources and information – the whole centre was full of energy that day!

Booths Included:

- Foundry Victoria Youth Clinic – Pregnancy and Reproductive Health Support
- Foundry Victoria Youth Clinic – Gender Affirming Care
- FlowBox – The Female Monthly Cycle
- ISH-VNFC – Women’s Empowerment Circles
- VNFC – Indigemind
- Esquimalt Teen Centre REC
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness – Connecting youth to elders, culture and nature
- UVIC – Community Mapping, Shared Wisdom of 2Spirit Youth
- Quadra Village Community Centre
- Specialized Youth Detox
- Camas Books
- Camosun College at VNFC – Upgrading and College Programs
- UVIC Department of Psychology – Life in University as an Indigenous Student
- Aids Vancouver Island Health and Community Services – Harm Reduction/Sexual Health Overdose Awareness
- Out of the Rain Youth Shelter – Homelessness Prevention Program
- Substance UVIC – Drug checking program

- Victoria Sexual Assault Centre – Youth Services
- Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee
- RBC
- Moose Hide Campaign
- South Island Indigenous Authority
- First Nations Health Authority

Workshops Offered:

- Occupational Therapy for Youth
- FNHA – De-stigmatizing Dialogue: Conversations about Harm Reduction and Substance Use
- Mini Drums Cultural Craft
- VNFC Art Therapy
- VNFC Garden workshop
- VNFC – Pom-Pom Keychains Cultural Craft
- RBC – Financial Literacy for Youth
- FlowBox – Ending Period Poverty
- SIHA – Drafting Our Own Law For Us, By Us
- RCYBC – Transforming Ethical, Safe and Supported Story Telling
- Virtual Reality with VNFC Elders
- VNFC – Beading Cultural Craft
- VNFC – Button Making
- VNFC – Colouring Pages



The team has been glad to be running monthly Drop-in nights for our 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigiqueer youth. Activities have included pronoun bracelet making, a swim night, a movie night, a vision board night, a medicine walk, metal stamping and more! Youth and VNFC staff also registered and participated in the Pride Parade! It was a wonderful day of celebration,

and we plan to do it again this year.

Research and 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigiqueer youth engagement

In collaboration with doctoral student Holly Reid (University of British Columbia) and the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) in Vancouver, our youth team has engaged in co-facilitation a range of activities aimed to co-create a research study with the 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous community. Over the past year, we have hosted drop-in activities for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth with a focus on consulting them about their thoughts and interests related to the research study exploring the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous peoples. This partnership with Holly and UNYA led to obtaining a Research Development grant (\$9,149) and more recently a Knowledge Sharing and Mobilization grant (\$14,247) through the BC Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research (BC NEIHR).

This funding is being used to reimburse youth for their time through offering honoraria, providing food at each session and accessing the resources and supplies required to run these activities. It is also funding our work to be presented at conferences related to Holly's area of study (occupational therapy) and covers expenses from an operational perspective (kitchen catering, room booking). Some examples of the activities we have done include a pride flag paint night, bracelet making, collages, sundae making, and cooking.

During these activities, youth are offered the opportunity to share their thoughts about what they would like to see a research study explore, what methods they would like the research to use, and how the knowledge gathered throughout the study should be shared back to the community. The study has now been approved by ethics and is underway!

IndigeMind Climate Action and Land-Based Learning

The IndigeMind ClimateAction program is a one-of-a-kind, transformative, and unique land-based program designed for Indigenous youth both on and off reserve. IndigeMind has 3 core Pillars:

1. Cultural Revitalization through land-based programming
2. Mental health and well-being of Indigenous youth
3. Exposure and exploration of potential career and education pathways within the Climate Action space

It is with a combination of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science, participants will learn hands on practical skills which can increase the adaptive capacity of their home communities.

The IndigeMind program is running cohort-style programs, as well as working in collaboration with the RAVE drop-in to bring Climate Action Land Based learning to as many youth as possible.

Staff Training & Conferences

- ASIST Suicide First Aid
- Vicarious Trauma Training
- Foodsafe
- First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid
- Community Learning program
- Fostering Emotional Well-being & Bolstering Resilience in Children and Youth
- Communication, Project Management, Proposal Writing, Budgets and Financials

Thank You to Our Funders:

- Canada Heritage
- Home Depot
- New Relationship Trust
- PHSA
- RBC
- TELUS
- Victoria Foundation
- BCAAFC
- MCFD
- Donors

Youth Programs Stats:

Total Points of Service	Youth Served	Age Range:
7191	345	12-25

Properties, Homes & Living Supports Department Programs

Properties Team

Shelter



Properties Team

Respectfully submitted by the VNFC Properties Team

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

STAFF:

Raelene Curry

Team Lead Housing Supports

Marcus McCullough

Housing Support Worker

Jessica McDonald

Housing Support Worker

Kelsey Acheson

Housing Support Worker

Bryan Adair

Tenant Support Worker



Housing Support Services Overview:

This year proved exceptionally busy, marked by a surge in requests for housing assistance. With the rising cost of living, escalating market rentals, dwindling available housing, and lengthy waitlists for affordable options, our team successfully sheltered 40 Community Members. Handling 217 case files and delivering 13,675 points of service, excluding those from programming and outreach efforts, underscored our commitment to meeting community needs.

Early in the fiscal year, the team experienced staff turnover, with Molly and Kirsten departing VNFC in April and May. Marcus and Jessica joined in May and June, respectively, followed by Kelsey in September. Each member brought unique experience and insight, enhancing the quality of service and support provided. Testimonials from clients attest to feeling valued, heard, and cared for under their guidance.

Amid organizational restructuring, VNFC witnessed the evolution of its departments, including the transition of the Housing Supports team into the Properties, Homes, and Living Supports Department, with the addition of a Tenant Support Worker to our portfolio. This transition allowed us to pool our expertise, resources, and knowledge, ensuring the delivery of professional and high-quality services to the communities we serve.

Application Day



Gimme Shelter

The Programing and Outreach efforts have been robust, encompassing a wide range of initiatives:

- Collaborating with various organizations and Local Nations to provide extensive support for housing security.
- Conducting weekly outreach in marginalized areas, providing essential resources, and advocating for systemic change.
- Hosting Application Day events to assist with paperwork and barrier removal, benefiting 60 participants.
- Delivering education on tenant rights and budgeting to 93 participants through the Gimme Shelter Program.
- Assisting 538 individuals with short-term subsidies to prevent homelessness.
- Partnering with the Credit Counselling Society for monthly financial literacy workshops, attended by 108 participants.
- Furnishing beds, furniture, and household items for individuals transitioning into new homes through the Start-up Kit Program.
- Offering tailored programming and support for tenants, focusing on life skills and wellness.

Additionally, introducing interactive cooking classes and launching a bi-weekly wellness program demonstrate a commitment to holistic support and community well-being.

Honorable Mentions and Partners:



VNFC Shelter

Respectfully submitted by Diego Enciso, Shelter Manager

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



Navigating Challenges, Building Resilience

Shelter Support Team:		Shelter Supervisors:	Shelter Coordinator:
Alistair N.	Brent B.	Kim H.	Matt D. Shelter Manager: Diego E.
Wanda G.	Ustat K.	Chemeca A.	
Michelle M.	Wanda G.		
Nicolas O.	Mariah C.		
Davis T.	Nikki W.		
Jon C.	David A.		
Brian M.			

For the past year, our shelter has served as a haven for the unhoused individuals in our community. We've strived to provide a secure, clean, and inviting environment where our guests can find respite, recover, and access the support they need. Beyond merely offering a place to sleep, we're committed to delivering vital services like medical care, counseling, and job training programs, especially tailored to support our Indigenous community members. Our devoted staff work tirelessly to foster a supportive atmosphere, lending an ear, extending a helping hand, and offering solace to those facing adversity.

In addition to providing freshly prepared, nutritious meals, shower facilities, and laundry services, we connect our guests with job training opportunities and employment aid, aiding them in rebuilding their lives. Our shelter stands as a beacon of hope, offering the necessary support for our guests to chart a path towards a brighter future.

Expanding our program, VNFC Season Shelter now offers continuous support and refuge year-round. This commitment underscores our belief that everyone deserves a place to call home, irrespective of the season. We're steadfast in our mission to provide shelter, care, and assistance each day of the year.

Through collaborations with our community partners, we've broadened our impact, reaching more individuals in need. While proud of our accomplishments over the past year, we remain cognizant of the work that lies ahead. Our resolve to combat homelessness burns brighter than ever, fueled by the unwavering support of our donors and collaborators. Together, we're poised to make even greater strides in the year ahead, transforming lives one step at a time. In unity, we're effecting meaningful change, touching the lives of those we serve.



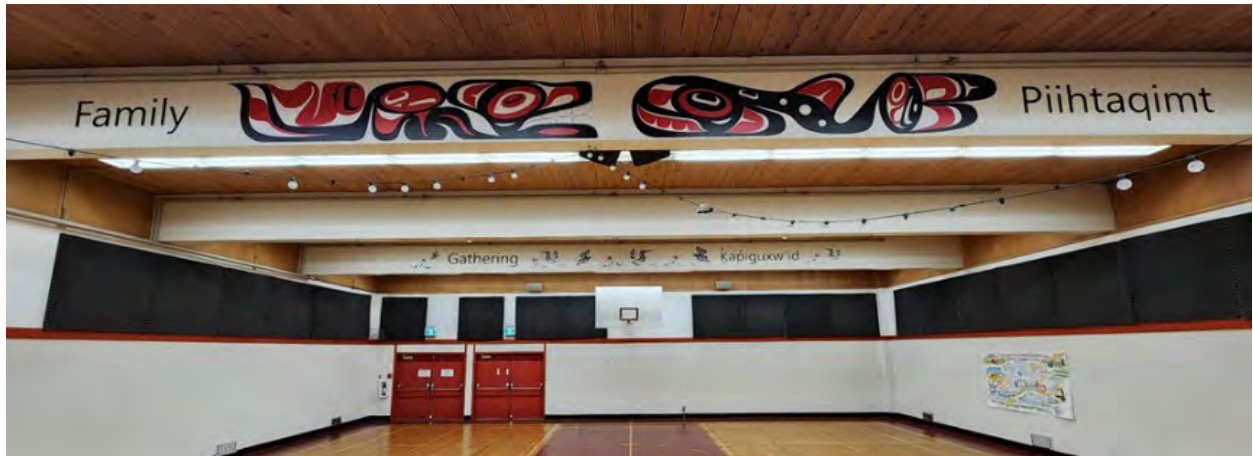
Shelter Guest Testimonials.

“I’ve been staying with you guys since day 1 and it’s been wonderful. I really like the staff, they’re excellent. The shelter feels nice and safe, and the food is so good. I’ve been coming here for so long, I kind of take it for granted, because it just feels like home. It was so nice to hear that you’re open all season this year.” -Sandra L.

“The shelter has been a home away from home for me. It’s been comforting and everyone that works here has been easy to talk with, you know, they talk to us like we’re normal people. It’s not like the other places I’ve stayed where they bark orders at us. I’m staying here while I’m waiting to get into treatment and having other members from the VNFC help me navigate the process.” -Ray S.

“The shelter helps me take care of all my needs here. I can get sleep, food, shower, wash my clothes and even get new clothes from the donations. I feel like the staff here are in the right place. The only negative I can think of is that I wish you served dessert. “ -Kris O.

“My name is Carl Charleson, bed #7. I’m writing in concern of the VNFC shelter, and its staff. I’m grateful for the services provided and not only for the housing need, but the staff is very professional, courteous, informative. The food is great! This system functions very well. Again, all my thanks to you! My Momma and my dad would thank you too, but they’re in Heaven. Klecko Klecko” -Carl C.



Wellness & Health Department Programs

Wellness & Health Team

Indigenous Culture & Traditions

Territory for the Arts



Wellness And Health

Respectfully submitted by Grey Showler, Director of Wellness and Health Services

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

Current Staff

Grey Showler	Director of Wellness and Health Services
Christina Kante	Wellness Team Manager
Michele Nault Mortimer	VNFC Primary Care Network Indigenous Lead
Shona Collison	Art Therapist
Isobel Dick	Indigenous Wellness Provider Health Support
Scott Ireson	Health Administrative Assistant
Kelsey Sutton	Mental Health and Substance Use Support Worker
Linda Duarte	Registered Clinical Counselor Substance Use Support
Julie Parrell	Garden Team Lead
Raelynn Proudlove	Garden Support
Stephanie Sketchley	Senior Garden Support
Kaleih Lafleur	Medical Office Assistant
Bonnie Alexander	Medical Office Assistant
Dr. Kate Elliot	Family Physician
Dr. Bilal Bagha	Family Physician
Dr. Frank Nezil	Family Physician
Danielle Linton	Nurse Practitioner
Tarah Reece	Nurse Practitioner
Liz Lofts	Nurse Practitioner
Gabrielle Parizeau	Nurse Practitioner
Mary-Daniels	PCN Indigenous Wellness Provider
Jack Omeasoo	PCN Indigenous Wellness Provider
Rebecca Rubin	PCN Indigenous Wellness Provider
Sakshi Satish	PCN indigenous Wellness Provider



Overview

The VNFC Wellness and Health Department brings together our primary care, mental health, garden, health support, and Indigenous Wellness Provider programs to provide an integrated, interdisciplinary care team to support community with holistic, wrap-around care. The past year was another year of growth as we continue to add new team members, programs, and a new health centre to meet the needs of community. This year we provided over 2500 community members with nearly 26,000 points of service across all our programs. In our annual community feedback survey, community overwhelmingly expressed that our programs are meeting their needs with 95% of respondents saying they would recommend our services

to a friend or family. While we have accomplished a lot this year, we continue to look for ways to improve our services and improve support for the community we serve.

The year in review 2023 - 2024

- We completed a renovation at the VNFC to create 3 new clinical rooms and office space allowing for us to offer primary care, counselling, foot care, physiotherapy and other Wellness services in a purpose built space.
- The VNFC, in partnership with Island Health, the Victoria PCN, and the Ministry of Health completed renovations on a new health centre at 2951 Tillicum Rd. The new VNFC health Centre features 7 exam rooms in approximately 3800 square feet of newly built spaces, to provide culturally safe primary health care to the region's Indigenous community. The new clinical space will feature extensive art and design by artists Jamin Zuroski, Bradley Dick, and Joslyn Williams. This is the largest Indigenous owned and operated health centre in the region serving the urban Indigenous and local First Nations communities.
- The Wellness Team was pleased to add a new Registered Clinical Counselor position to our team. Linda has been in the position since May 2023, providing culturally safe counselling and substance use support to community.
- We implemented the new Indigenous Wellness Provider team in collaboration with the Victoria Primary Care Network. 4 new positions were created who now walk with community on their health journey, providing ongoing support to access health services as well as connection to culture and traditional health practice.
- Our Primary Care team continued to grow with the addition of a new Nurse Practitioner, a new Family Physician and 2 new Medical Office Assistants.
- We hosted the first Care Fair at the VNFC since the pandemic, welcoming in hundreds of community members to receive a range of health services with over 40 organizations participating.



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	Indigenous Reaching Homes
Investment Agricultural Fund	City Folks Farm Folks	Compost Education Centre
Pacific Forestry Centre	Mary Pack Arthritis Centre	Victoria Primary Care Network
Saanich Neighbourhood House	South Island Division of Family Practice	BC Cancer Agency

Program Summaries and Highlights

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 Lunch and Learns with the Brain Injury Society, Mary Pack Arthritis Society, Island Health Diabetes educators, BC Transit, AVI's Community-led Crisis Response (CLCR), and BC Cancer. We hosted a 6-week Honour Your Health Challenge with funding from ISPARC, which included health information and community-based outings like Aquafit and a nature walk. We offered regular cultural supports from a variety of Elders and Knowledge Keepers. In the Wellness Room, community members access free massage, acupuncture, herbal medicine, nutritional consultations, and foot care.

- 1-1 clients – 23
- Wellness Room Appointments – 736
- Lunch and Learn/Workshops attendees – 137

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 provide individualized supports to Indigenous patients and families residing within the Victoria Primary Care Network (PCN) and the 4 First Nations served by VNFC primary care services. IWP 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 provide accompaniment to medical appointments and help bridge gaps between primary care and specialized medical services. As importantly, they support clients to access Indigenous medicine and cultural supports. They also offer health-related education programming including self-management for chronic conditions such as arthritis and chronic pain.



Michele Nault Mortimer continues as the PCN Indigenous Lead for the team. We currently have 4 PCN Indigenous Wellness Providers supporting the community with an active case load. The team were provided with an extensive onboarding and training to set up the new team in a good way. We have seen a very clear need for accompaniment to medical appointments, specialist appointments and follow up care. The teamwork across the lifespan and support a wide diversity of health needs. The PCN IWP's are now connected to the Victoria PCN Cohort teams that will connect them to the Primary Care Providers within the Victoria PCN. The IWP team has been very successful in their partnership with the Mary Pack Arthritis Centre and have completed a six session Arthritis information and support group for the community.

Michele's work as the co-chair for Indigenous Collaborative that provided guidance and knowledge to the Victoria and Western PCN has come to a close. The Victoria PCN and Western PCN will be reorganizing their community engagement based on a governance refresh. Michele continued to support the work with the Community Action Learning (CAL) team in the development and delivery of the Indigenous Safety in Healthcare (ISH). Michele facilitated/co-facilitated the 12 Cohorts that were completed at the VNFC. Michele continues to sit on the Advisory for ISH as the team at the VNFC works to build in the sustainability for this important Cultural Safety training opportunity.

Mental Health and Substance Use

VNFC Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) services provide individual, and group supports for community seeking to improve their health and make changes to their substance use. MHSU services include one-to-one supports and referrals to community supports and services, including treatment and other substance use programs. Importantly, our MHSU

services also include cultural pathways to healing and this year offered activities including Healing and Colouring Circle, Beading Circles, and Cultural Support which provides people struggling with substance use a path to connect with traditional healing and the Community.

Staff in this program participated in FNHA Wellness Tables, Health Fairs at Songhees, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), and Pauquachin First Nations, Project Reconnect, Ahousaht Wellness Gathering, CMHA Collaborative, ACEH Collaborative Response Network, and Provincial Indigenous Led Mobile Crisis Response Advisory.

- Hosted training, including Lateral Violence (Red Cross), Not Just Naloxone (FNHA), ASIST (with Lifeworks and Saanich Neighbourhood House)
- Hosted 12 Healing Support Circles
- Co-hosted 21 beading circles in partnership with Indigenous Cultures and Traditions
- 222 people received cultural support
- 130 people received 1-1 MHSU support



Garden

The VNFC Garden grows food and traditional medicines to share with community while also offering events and programs for people to connect with the land and each other. We provided fresh seasonal produce to our hamper program and kitchen, which was shared with community and included in food for the daycare, Community Lunch, and other workshops and programs hosted at VNFC.



This year we began the development our Traditional Medicine Processing Hub, which included purchasing supplies for medicine processing and delivering workshops at VNFC and in the community. We were able to distribute more medicines to urban Indigenous Community members through our growing relationships with other organizations and our presence at numerous events throughout the year.

We started the development of our Peer Gardening program, which offered 9 participants an opportunity to learn about urban gardening and plant medicines, while receiving an honorarium for their work in the garden. The program is for marginalized Indigenous people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and will continue to grow in the next year.

We also began work to re-vitalize and Indigenize a property located in Oak Bay which was generously donated to the VNFC.

Workshops summary:

- 30 events with over 500 people!
- 8 Medicine-Making (Salves/Bath Salts /Smudge Sprays) Workshops:
 - VNFC Women's Warrior, QomQem Costal Connections, Pacifica, Oasis, UVic medical students, Winter Holiday staff and Community party
- 4 Art and Gardening workshops
- 3 Gardening Workshops: Siem Lelum, Container Gardens, Seedlings and starts
- 5 Food Preparation Workshops: Fermenting, Kombucha, and Sourdough (with Compost education Centre), Cooking and BBQ at Siem Lelum
- 10 Community Events:
 - Open Houses and Tours, Community Smudge, Volunteer Party, Hub release Party, National Indigenous People's Day at VNFC, Project Reconnect, VNFC's Youth 2SLGBTQ Gathering, VNFC Community Care Fair

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, Sci'aneu, and Pacheedaht First Nations. Our team continued to grow in size this year, so much that we have moved to a new, purpose built health centre at 2951 Tillicum Rd. Our team now consists of 4 NPs, 2 FPs and 3 Medical Office Assistants (MOAs) and provided 8059 primary care visits to our 1895 community members attached to our team.



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 2024/25.

Our Team at work: A story from our Indigenous Wellness Providers Elaine McDonald is a 70-year-old Indigenous elder with Parkinson's disease. She cannot walk or drive very far, and her band is not able to assist her financially in the purchase of an electric wheelchair. I was able to give her assistance completing her forms, research resources and figure out pathways, communicate with her primary care provider and help speed up the process.

In February, 2024, she had received a letter back from Kinsmen Foundation of BC stating that they can financially assist with \$1500.00 towards an electric wheelchair.



Indigenous Culture and Traditions

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Mercure, Indigenous Culture and Traditions Coordinator

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024

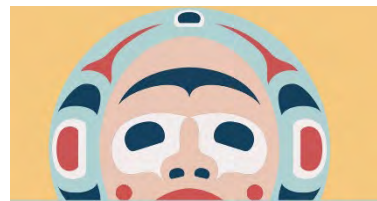
Indigenous Culture and Traditions Team:

ICT Team Lead: Lisa Mercure (Mikisew Nihîyaw, Dëne Sųhné and wemistikôsiw/French)

Elder Support: (vacant)

Language Support: Dale Whitford (Metis Cree)

Culture Support: Ash Murphy (W̱SÁNEĆ & 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 include cultural activities embedding Indigenous language. 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 37 Indigenous Elders and Seniors. 20 are casual employees, with 17 Elders who also provide support. They are actively reclaiming their Traditional role being at the centre of community, in an urban setting. This past year they tripled their involvement with over 2,930 hours connecting directly with community, through more VNFC teams and some external bookings. 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. With every loss, we recognize the urgent need to actively support the transfer of knowledge to more Indigenous community members and mentor/support emerging Elders.

Currently, no core funding exists for Indigenous Elders, a seed fund is provided by the federal government annual \$25,000 grant. We fundraise through our Elder & Seniors craft

cupboard year-round, host Silent Auctions 1-2 times yearly. This year the Elders coordinated a

Salmon bun sandwich fundraiser and supported a larger fundraiser end of March for the language program.

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

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.

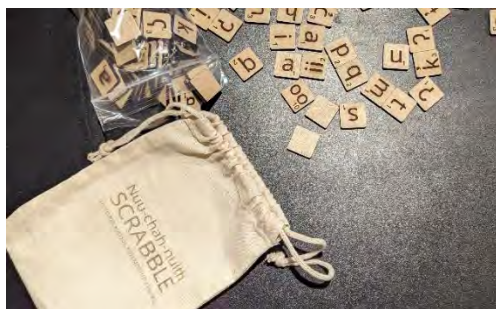
Urban Indigenous Language Hub - We held two Language Advisory gatherings to bring the cohorts together to help the six Indigenous Language groups to share what each cohort is working on.



Nihyaw (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.

nuučaanuul – 3 fluent speakers, 1 helper supporting teaching basic language. We partnered with Victoria Custom Laser to create scrabble game our helper

Cathryn created in collaboration with her VIU language cohort for the nuučaanuul fonts. It made the news [CTV News Vancouver Island at 4:30 for Wednesday, January 31, 2024](#)



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.

Anishinaabe – 3 helpers leading basic language classes and two potluck gatherings. This co-hort 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.

We had late notification after January 2024 of federal funding through Canadian Heritage would not be renewed (after five years). VNFC implemented a lobby effort which resulted in multiple media interviews over 3 months, and community assisting with fundraising in March 2024.

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.

Our team supported Speakers to host programming during the Youth teams LGBTQ2+ event. The Elders had so much fun trying out a VR game, and hosting cultural workshops. 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, workshops for VNFC teams, including Elders and local Indigenous Artisans. We hosted Wapos Rabbit Keychains, Medicine Pouches, and Cedar weaving at BCAAFC's annual Gathering Our Voices, the Elders had a great time ..and have been invited back to support the Elders Room activities with VNFC Elders (wherever it will travel to in BC next year)



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 maintain a contact list for teams to build upon, including info for 90 local Indigenous Artisans.

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.

Wellness Workshops – Our friends at Tsow Tun Lelum have supported our Elders and community to heal. Active Elders is also code for FUN outings and fieldtrips to keep us active. Since Sept 2018 – May 2024 our amazing Yul Hill hosted weekly sessions, now that he's taken advanced training he has another location – thank you for years of service. Monthly Chair Yoga with Tanisha includes meditations and gentle movements perfect for desk people and Elders.



Events: We hosted Tipi Teachings: Stories and Songs with local and diverse Language Speakers, Elders, Cultural Practitioners.

June 21 - National Indigenous Peoples Day (NIPD)
Coordinated by Royal Roads University to collaborate with 19 Indigenous partner agencies.

The event was well attended over 1,600 participants. We welcomed community the full day with Tipi Teaching: Stories and Songs. Everyone enjoyed their time together and seeing so many students attending.

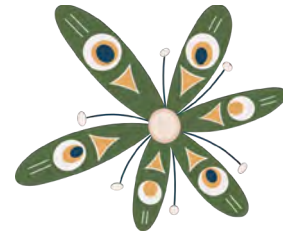


September 30 - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) The ICT team with key staff and a team of volunteers hosted 'Tipi Teachings: Stories and Songs'. Community responded by showing support, with over 10,000 participants. We hosted over 2,250 participants, with more taking time to acknowledge fluent Speakers/Old Ones and Cultural Practitioners.

Territory for the Arts

Respectfully submitted by Shona Collison, Art Wellness Programs

Reporting Period: April 2023-March 2024



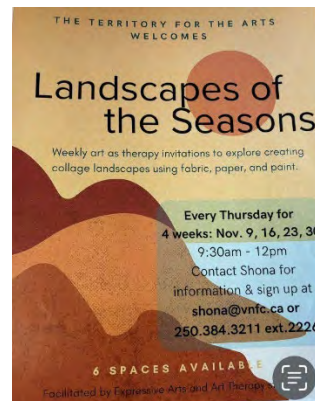
The Territory was created to offer a safe space for Community to gather and focus on Art making with the basic tenant that 'there is no wrong way to do art'. The Territory has seen many Art Therapy practicum students over the years and programming has always been very well attended.

Art as Therapy is offered in the Territory with directives developed by Art Therapy Practicum students for either sign-up programming or Community drop-in.

Art as Medicine is a closed Art Therapy processing group that offers a weekly ongoing phenomenological, somatic based therapeutic process. This group is a closed group with an interview process for enrollment. As it is a long-term program the numbers sometimes ebb and flow, but participation has always been steady, and participants have expressed how helpful this process is to affecting positive change in their lives.

The Territory for the Arts currently has two practicum students, both from the Canadian International Institute of Art Therapy (CIAT) Tina Tam and Miream Rabba. Directives have been offered weekly on Thursdays by Tina and on Friday afternoon's by Miream. These have been very well attended and feedback from participants has been very positive. One participant expressed "I just want to stay all day in here and do art!" and an Elder commented that "This is real healing for me."

Some of the offerings this past year:



We had a visiting Coast Salish Artist who created a painting over a three-day period in the Territory, Community and staff stopped by to chat and witness the process.

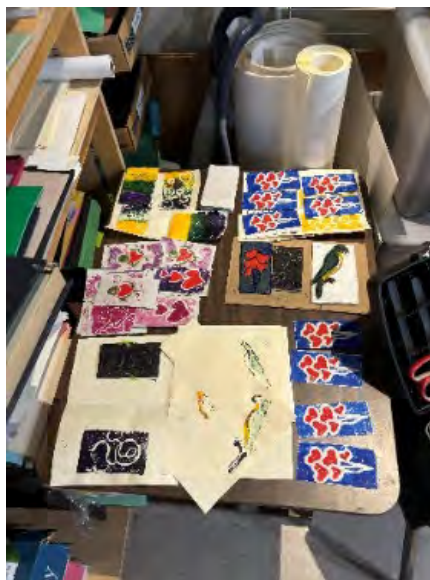


Here is some Community Artwork from Thursday sessions.

Reverse coloring with watercolor and ink:



Printmaking with positive affirmations on the back:



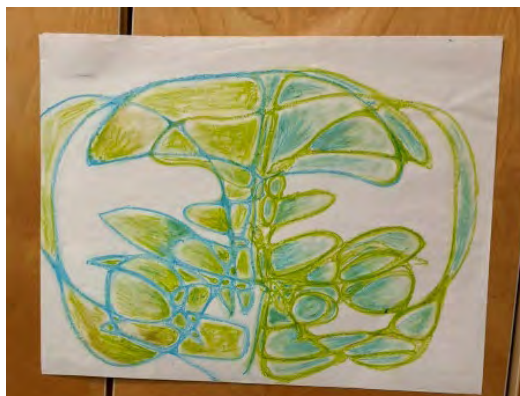
Some of the artwork created by Community from directives offered on FUN and FABULOUS FRIDAYS: Plasticine scene portraits!



Expressions with air dry clay:



Bilateral drawings using oil pastels:





We provided a directive of 'Pocket Allies' using matchboxes for youth attending the LGBTQ2 conference in February. It was very well attended with 20 youth dropping in to participate.

The Territory offered program directives to both the Women's and the Men's Warrior programs.

The Men's Warrior program worked on Manifest paintings:



The Women's Warrior program worked on paint and paper manifestations:



The film on 'Art Heals' being made with 6 Indigenous Artists in partnership with CIAT is anticipated to be completed by mid-year.

The Territory recieved funding, again in partnership with CIAT, to support 5-7 Indigenous artists/post secondary students to attend, on site at VNFC , CIAT's 16 week Therapuetic Arts Practitioner Program (TAPPS). These students have completed phase 1 of 3 phases designed to to Indigenize the TAPPS program, which in turn can be offered to Indigenous Community as an Educational peice and also suppoort Art as Therapy to be offered in Indigenous Community both live and virtually from and with an Indigenous perspective.

We have applied for more funding to proceed with phase 2 of this 3 phase project. The hope is that CIAT will be able to offer an Indigenous Art Therapy Diploma program to train Indigneous Art Therapists.

The Territory is looking forward to a busy summer, offering more Art directives, including Youth, and some one on one therapuetic sessions into the summer with two Art Therapy practicum students onsite.

Strategic Planning at the VNFC, September 15th & 16th, 2023



Photo by Gregory Forsberg



Victoria Native Friendship Centre

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250-384-3211 www.vnfc.ca

VNFC respectfully acknowledges the territory of the Łək'wəḡən People , known today as the Songhees & Xwsepsum on whose land we live, work, learn, and prosper