

2025 Annual Report

Fiscal Year April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025



Photo by Geoff Howe



Victoria Native Friendship Centre

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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 Indigenous 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, Indigenous Services Canada, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Service Canada, Women and Gender Equity Canada, BC Housing, BC Gaming, Island Health Authority, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, the BCAAFC, the NAFC, and family and community foundations, and private donors.

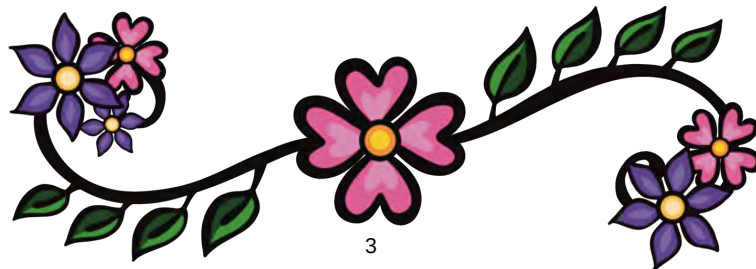
Community Partners

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 2024 Small Business Pledge, a meaningful way for the business community to contribute towards reconciliation. The following are some additional VNFC funders, community partner agencies and organizations.

- Songhees First Nation
- Xwepsum Nation
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness
- Aboriginal Headstart
- Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- Coast Salish Employment & Training Society
- First Nations Health Authority
- First Peoples Cultural Council
- Malahat First Nation
- Pacheedaht First Nation
- Pauquachin First Nation
- Sica'new First Nation
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- T'Souke First Nation
- Tsartlip First Nation
- Tsawout First Nation
- Tseycum First Nation
- Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
- M'akola Group of Societies
- National Association of Friendship Centres
- New Relationship Trust
- Indigenous People's Resilience Fund
- Salish Sea Housing
- School District 61 INED
- School District 62 Indigenous Education
- Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services

Community Partners cont'd

- Anonymous Donors
- A Dollar a Day Foundation
- Air Canada Foundation
- Bank of Nova Scotia
- Benefaction
- Bruce and Patricia Sanders
- Camosun College
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Capital Health Region
- Christ Church Cathedral parish
- Church of St John the Divine parish
- City of Victoria
- Clint and Carole Forster
- CMHC- Housing Challenge
- COBS Bread
- Cool Aid Society
- Exeter FD
- First West Credit Union
- Foodbanks BC
- Future Generations Fund
- Good Food Box
- Greater Victoria Public Library
- Indigenous Agriculture Foundation of BC
- Indigenous Reconciliation Fund- Catholic Diocese
- Island Health Authority
- Kiwanis Club
- Local quilters and knitters who donate handmade baby quilts and baby clothes for our newborns
- M1 Agency
- McConnell Foundation
- Mischa Weisz Foundation
- NICHI
- North Star Organics
- Order of St John of Jerusalem
- Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions
- Parent Support Services
- Provincial Employees Community Service Fund
- Real Estate Foundation
- Rina M. Bidin Foundation
- Rotary Club
- Saanich Municipality
- Second Harvest
- Shoppers Foundation Women's Health
- Small Business Pledge participants
- TD Challenge
- Tiny Foundation
- United Church of Canada
- United Way British Columbia
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Foundation
- Van City Community Foundation
- Victoria Chamber of Commerce
- Victoria Foundation
- Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre



In 2024-2025, the VNFC

- Provided over 500,000 points of service, supporting 9,500 + members of community
- **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 79 units** of safe and affordable housing for Indigenous Community on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish People
- **Contributed \$9.5 million** in wages, salaries, and professional fees to the community
- **Cared for 59** Indigenous children in our daycare

Board of Directors Report

2024-25

Before I present my report, we, the Board of Directors, would like to sincerely acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən, the Songhees Nation, and the Xwsepsum Nation, who have graciously cared for these beautiful lands and sacred waters for countless generations. We are genuinely humbled and deeply grateful for the opportunity to work within this territory.



For those who may be unfamiliar with my background, my name is David Dick, also known as SUMÉ,ɬ I am a proud member of the Songhees Nation, with Dr. Baptiste (Skip) Dick, “Lexixekek,” as my father and Linda Dick as my mother, also from the Songhees Nation. It is a distinct honor for me to serve as President of our Board of Directors over the past year. I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to our dedicated volunteer Directors on the Board:

- Nathalie Pambrun (Director) - Committees: Governance, Housing & Development
- Shelly Wilton (Director) - Committees: Governance
- Gabe Paul, Youth (Director) - Committees: Finance
- Shelley Cardinal (Director) - Committees: Governance
- Rosy Hartman, Secretary - Committees: Housing & Development
- Elaine Ting, Treasurer - Committees: Finance and Chair of the Finance Committee
- Nigel Decontie, 2nd Vice President - Committees: Finance and Governance
- Jace Poirier, 1st Vice President - Committees: Housing & Development

This year, our Board maintained its hybrid meeting format, which gives members the flexibility to participate either in person or remotely, accommodating the diverse schedules and commitments of our members. Over the past year, the unwavering dedication and exemplary leadership displayed by our board members have supported the operations of the VNFC organization, with each individual's commitment to be part of the Board of Directors. During this fiscal year, from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, the Board held a total of eight meetings, with December being the only month when we were unable to reach a quorum. The Finance Committee met successfully six times, while the Governance Committee convened approximately five times. Additionally, the Housing and Development Committee held several meetings throughout the year as needed. It is important to note that the Board does not meet during July and August. Our Board remains committed to supporting, guiding, and assisting our Executive Director in developing a comprehensive operational and financial plan.

Furthermore, the Board is actively involved in the ongoing review and enhancement of essential policies, which include the Safety Policy Statement, Lockdown and Hold and Secure Procedures, and Computer Use and Data Security.

Board of Directors Report

cont'd 2024-25

As I stated in my report last year, “the VNFC has been a truly valuable source of support, effectively filling gaps when local and federal organizations may not fully meet our community’s needs.”

The Friendship Centre movement remains a cornerstone of life across Canada, offering vital programs, services, and support to Indigenous people residing in urban, rural, and remote areas. Here at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, we are committed to remaining true to our values as a welcoming, home-like place for everyone who has chosen the Greater Victoria area as their home.

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Ron Rice and all the wonderful staff at the center. Your tireless efforts make an incredible difference in our community every single day. The warm greetings you offer to guests as they enter, the care you extend to our future generations-whether through youth activities or daycare-and your dedication to supporting those who are facing challenges be they mental health issues, educational needs, or temporary shelter requirements are truly commendable. The staff overseeing the center play a critical role. Your unwavering support has a profound and positive impact on the well-being of the individuals and families you serve. Thank you for your continued strength, resilience, and the meaningful contributions you make to our community.

I am encouraged by the growth of the VNFC as it continues to adhere to the Strategic Plan established by all those who participated last year, providing the necessary guidance to advance the VNFC.

Hay'sxw'qa/Thank you

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



Executive Director's Report 2024-25

On behalf of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre Board, management, and staff, I would like to acknowledge the territory of the Llək'wəŋən people, who for the last 55 years have welcomed us graciously.

This past year has been one of growth, persistence, and powerful community connection. As we reflect on our journey over the last fiscal year, I am filled with gratitude for the dedication of our staff, the trust of our community, and the strength of our shared vision for Indigenous health and wellness.

Big Huy ch q'u and congratulations to our Assistant Executive Director Kari Hutchison who has dedicated 30 years of service to the VNFC, and has stood by my side as a strong leader and strategic thinker for our growing agency.

On May 9th, 2024, we proudly opened the doors of the Camas Lelum Primary Care Clinic. This long-awaited project is more than just a healthcare facility; it is a community-led space rooted in cultural safety, offering wraparound services that reflect our traditional values and modern needs. Its opening marks a significant step forward in our mission to improve access to care for Indigenous families. Clinic staff are working their way through the waitlist, welcoming a total of 2500 new patients into care.

We also launched our Monthly Donor Campaign, engaging our supporters in a sustainable way to uplift our programs. The response has been encouraging, and we are grateful for those who have committed to walk alongside us through monthly giving. Your support ensures that our work can continue, grow, and adapt to the needs of our people.

Last year, we launched our Strategic Plan, developed through extensive consultation and reflection. Each of our programs has begun implementing the plan's priorities, grounding their work in our collective vision and ensuring we move forward with intention and unity. The process and outline has gotten the attention of our national office as a best practice.

Securing a site for our upcoming Complex Care Program has presented several challenges. Regulatory hurdles and approval processes have slowed progress, but our team continues to advocate tirelessly. This project remains a top priority as we work to ensure safe, culturally responsive housing and care for our most vulnerable relatives.

One of the year's highlights was our Gathering of Leaders, where we invited the ten local nations - Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, and community partners to share, learn, and strengthen our network. It was a powerful reminder that our resilience is rooted in relationships—and that our future is brightest when led by community.



Executive Director's Report

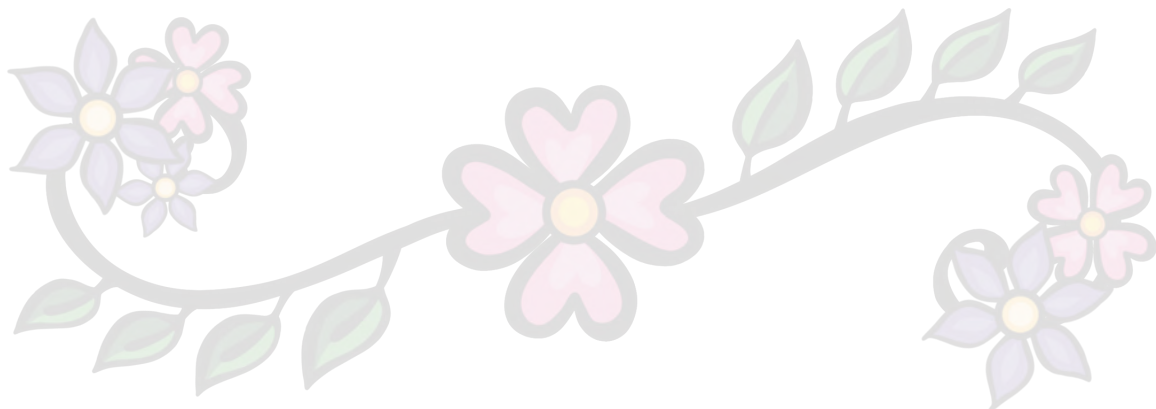
2024-25 cont'd

The VNFC is a major employer in the region, with over 200 employees. In addition to being of service to the community, we take pride in being connected to 200 families and households as an employer. The addition of staff or program activities is carefully considered, and we don't take this responsibility lightly

As we look ahead, I remain grounded in the knowledge that we are building something lasting and transformative. I thank each of you - our partners, funders, staff and community members for continuing this journey with us. Finally, I would like to thank our Board of Directors who give so generously of their time, expertise, and their big giant hearts so that VNFC may grow and serve as our founders intended.

Huy tsep q'u - Thanking you all

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



Administration Department Programs

Knit With Purpose Reaching Home Community Entity



Knit With Purpose

Respectfully Submitted by Megan Boddy, Communications & Special Projects



Staff

Kari McLay – Community Engagement & Fund Development

Marco Hungaro – Knit With Purpose Program Coordinator

VNFC's Knit With Purpose initiative is aimed at improving circumstances for Indigenous traditional knitters, disrupting the industry by ensuring that knitters are equitably compensated, and raising the profile of the Cowichan Sweater back to iconic status as a high-fashion family heirloom.

Find us at www.knitwithpurpose.com or follow us on Instagram @knit_with_purpose

Program Highlights

Knit turned one year old in October 2024! In our first year, we supported 21 knitters and staff while providing customers with a beautiful, wearable legacy of craftsmanship and tradition. This fiscal, Knit has sold 163 items, and due to popular demand, we have recently incorporated vests into the Knit range.

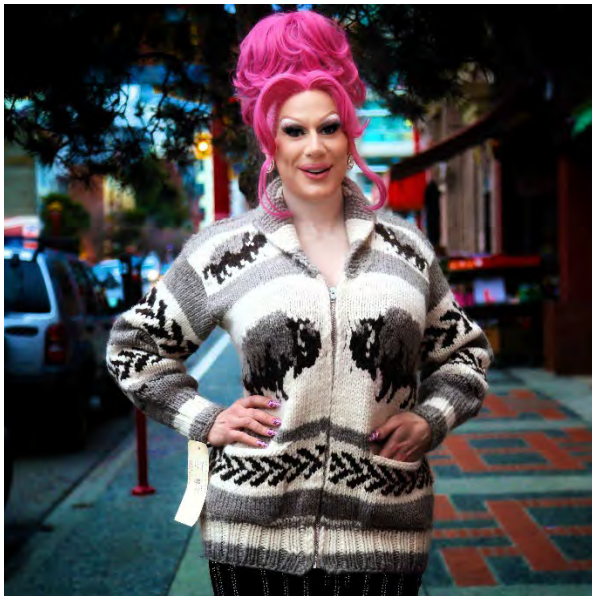
Knit's online presence and social media has seen continued steady growth after launch. One highlight was local designer and drag queen Jimbo's July 2024 support and promotion of Knit on his socials. We also received a custom sweater order for film work. To thank our followers and encourage more, we did a sweater giveaway on social media which saw more than 19,000 entries.

To support the sustainability of Knit, Kari McLay joined the team to provide expertise and leadership in high-end clothing retail and marketing. Knit soon entered into a sales affiliation with Old Stone Trade in New York (a curated online marketplace offering handmade luxury womenswear and accessories), resulting in a Knit sweater being featured in the New York Times. Knit was also featured in an article about knitwear on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) website.

Some Knit pop-up events in 2024 included:

- 2024 VNFC Winter Artisan's Market
- 2024 Winter Spirits Artisan Market – Oak Bay Beach Hotel
- 2024 Songhees Wellness Artist's Market
- 2024 Man and His Dog fashion show – Laurel Point Inn

VNFC envisions a continuation of the Knit With Purpose initiative, collaborating with local and international vendors and customers.



Indigenous Reaching Home

Respectfully Submitted by Katherin Cooper, Special Indigenous Reaching Home Senior Systems Navigator & Investment Administrator



Staff

Katherin Cooper, Special Indigenous Reaching Home Senior Systems Navigator & Investment Administrator

Jessica McDonald – Project Engagement and Coordinated Access Manager

VNFC is an Indigenous Community Entity (ICE) for the Reaching Home funding stream and operates as the Indigenous Reaching Home (IRH) team at VNFC. IRH is a federally funded program supported by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC). The program is delivered with the guidance and leadership of Indigenous partners and is dedicated to addressing homelessness and housing insecurity in Greater Victoria through culturally safe and community-driven approaches.

Our Engagement & Program Officer (EPO), Catrina Stenson, works within the Community Engagement and Service Delivery – Community Policy and Programs Branch at HICC. She plays a vital role in supporting program delivery, community engagement, and maintaining strong relationships with partners.

A central part of IRH is **the Indigenous Community Advisory Board (ICAB)**. This board is comprised of up to ten Indigenous representatives from Greater Victoria, each bringing valuable experience from organizations such as Mustard Seed, Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), M'akola Housing, School District 62, and others.

The ICAB provides critical guidance to the program. Their responsibilities include:

- Reviewing proposals and advising on funding recommendations.
- Offering advice on IRH Directives and identifying priority areas for the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) Community Entity to focus on.
- Supporting community engagement and ensuring that program delivery aligns with Indigenous values and priorities.
- Preparing for the implementation of the new **Coordinated Access System**, scheduled to launch next year. The ICAB is committed to ensuring this system is developed in a good way—one that is culturally safe, accessible, and responsive to the needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.



Through these efforts, IRH continues to strengthen community collaboration and ensure that Indigenous voices lead the way in addressing homelessness in Greater Victoria.

Program Highlights

In 2024-25, the IRH underwent a period of staffing realignment. Since then, the team has truly come together, collaborating exceptionally well to represent VNFC and IRH with excellence on a national level.

Year in Review

Our current partner projects include:

- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH)- *Advocacy and System Improvement*
- VNFC *Homes and Living Supports*
- Oasis Society for Spiritual Health-*Integrated Recovery and Holistic Wellness*
- QomQem Coastal Connections- *Housing and Outreach Program*
- Island Metis Family and Community Services Society (IMFCSS)- *Housing Support Program*
- SOLID Outreach Society- *Indigenous Housing Support*
- Threshold Housing Society- *Housing and Cultural Supports for Youth*
- VNFC Garden Project- *Traditional Medicines and Food Security- Stronger Together*

Stats

IRH Impact Highlights

IRH supported incredible work this fiscal year.

These are a few of the annual results we saw. Although these numbers are significant, they do not reflect the endless hours staff dedicated to building trusting relationships with people, advocating on their behalf, and collaborating with other programs and services.

Housing & Prevention Program Outcomes

- Stable Housing Placements
 - o 181 individuals successfully placed into more stable housing
 - o 88.4% retention rate
- Short-Term Rental Assistance
 - o 110 individuals benefitted
- Core Prevention Services
 - o 648 individuals supported
 - o 97% maintained housing after at least 3 months

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

The IRH team continues to strengthen its relationship with our counterparts at the CRD, who carry the Designated Reaching Home stream. Together, we remain dedicated to serving our community and addressing the complex and ever-changing needs associated with housing. In addition, the IRH team has built a close and collaborative relationship with the National Indigenous Homelessness Council (NIHC), which has helped bridge gaps between all BC Indigenous Community Entities. Through this connection, we stand united—stronger together—and continue to advocate for the critical system changes needed for our people

Summary

The Reaching Home program continues to grow and evolve each year, adapting to meet the changing needs of communities and individuals it serves. Through this evolution, the IRH team remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining a position of leadership within this important national initiative. We are dedicated to fostering meaningful collaboration, ensuring accountability, and advancing innovative approaches that support long-term solutions to homelessness.

We extend our deepest gratitude for the ongoing support and guidance of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) and our Indigenous Community Advisory Board (ICAB). Their partnership and leadership are essential to the success of this work, and we look forward to continuing to walk together on this path of positive change and community resilience.

Community Action & Learning Programs

Bruce Parisian Library

Community Learning & Indigenous Safety in Healthcare

Community Soup Lunch & Volunteer Program

Law Clinic



Community Action & Learning

Respectfully submitted by Chris Mockford, Leadership & Advocacy Coordinator



VNFC COMMUNITY
LEARNING PROGRAM

Staff

Tanya Clarmont, Director of Community Action & Learning
Amelia Ack, Climate and Social Justice Coordinator
Claire Bates, Special Events Coordinator
Kalyinka Cherkosh, Community Services Manager
Nadya Comeau, Community Action & Learning Administrative Assistant
Amea Douglass, Programs Coordinator
Alexis Moore, Community Engagement & Event Coordinator
Juli Ohsada, Curriculum Design Coordinator
David Jam Ramjattan, Learning Curriculum Manager
Cassidy Villebrun-Buracas, Law and Advocacy Coordinator
Sue White, Community Action & Learning Programs Coordinator

Community Soup Lunch and Volunteer Program

The Community Soup Lunch (CSL) is a high-impact program. It's also a living expression of our values: community care, belonging, and reciprocity. It provides an expanded learning experience for our volunteers culturally while serving our community.

Program Highlights

In 2024-2025, the VNFC CSL Team accomplished a huge success in organizing the Community Soup Lunch with both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous folks volunteering, learning and gaining experience in hosting culturally safe environments. With the support of our volunteers we served elders, those with disabilities, community members and staff. Each week our Soup lunch provides warm and healthy lunches for 140 people. At least 95% of our volunteers are also Community Learning Program (CLP) graduates. While historically CLP is how our volunteer program started, it is not a requirement to be a volunteer. Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds. We have received support from Indigenous and non-indigenous folks from places such as UVic, VicPD, Island Health, ICA, Volunteer Victoria, BCI, Lutheran Church, ReconciliAction, Garth Homer Society, Arrive Consulting, Work BC, Royal Jubilee Hospital Volunteer Program, Saanich City, CTRC Youth, Steps Forward, Fed/Prov government workers, friends, family and VNFC staff. We have also had support from Volunteers worldwide, with some of our Volunteers bringing an international background from as far as China! We are proud to create a space where folks can not only be fed and build community but that also allows for our volunteers to network and develop a strong working relationship with community.

Year in Review

From September to July 2024, Soup Lunch was supported by 874 Volunteers. An average volunteer shift is from 11am to 3pm. Roles and responsibilities that volunteers have are set up, food service, dishwashing, take down, clean up, and dish washing. For a soup lunch to run successfully we need a minimum 20 Volunteers per lunch.

The VNFC and the Community Soup Lunch have been recognized for their achievements with gratitude for exceptional work in building a good business and great community for all, leading the way to continued prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Added Events at Soup Lunch

Each year as we near Christmas, we join the Indigenous Culture and Traditions Department in hosting the Annual Christmas Artisan's market. During that period, we assist in organizing the event with 45 Volunteers and service up to 155 folks. We also support Artisans year-round with tables designated for vendors who wish to join us for soup lunch. In the past we have also hosted info tables at soup lunch such as the Bruce Parisian Library.

Challenges

With such a large weekly event, challenges will sometimes arise. The biggest challenges we face with soup lunch have been with volunteer scheduling and communications. Each week we find new challenges, whether that is too few volunteers that day, finding reliable methods of communication, maintaining accurate stats, overwhelming situations for the primary coordinator of the lunch in the face of emergencies or unique circumstances, or education for less experienced volunteers in cultural safety.

Volunteer Success Stories

Every volunteer is our hero, a success story in our eyes is all those who want to learn and connect to community. From folks who are new to the VNFC and want to engage in a relationship with community in a culturally safe environment, to those who flourish through the CSL and find successes through their love and support of community. Over the past year, we have witnessed volunteers who have stepped up and gone above and beyond in contributing their time and have taken on leadership roles. We have also witnessed volunteers who have built upon their time at CSL and have found success in their school or careers. One of our volunteers who has been supporting CSL while applying to universities across the country or other states has recently been accepted to begin their PhD! We are so proud to see our long-term volunteer succeed after they have been supporting us and building skills in leadership.



Volunteer Quotes

“When I first volunteered at soup lunch, I was waiting for approval for my Permanent Residence Status. I was a year and a half into the process, couldn't work, and didn't know too many people since I was from California. I stumbled upon the VNFC & Soup Lunch one random Friday and instantly felt at home. Coming from Sacramento, rated one of America's most diverse cities, it was a bit of a culture shock moving to Victoria. But finding the VNFC felt like a piece of home. I also wasn't exposed to much Indigenous culture growing up, so the VNFC provided me with a familiar feeling of home, while also educating me on matters I've never heard of previously. Being able to serve the community while also learning of these lands' history was and still is a blessing. I started volunteering Monday through Thursday with the hamper program and Fridays with Soup Lunch, making connections and meeting so many people. After 5 months of volunteering, I was finally granted Permanent Resident status with a valid work permit. Coincidentally I connected with a lady at the soup lunch who ended up being the manager for Youth Services. As soon as she heard I'd gained permanent resident status, she offered me the opportunity to join the youth team. Over a year and a half later, I've been a Youth Drop-In Coordinator for the VNFC, and I've loved every part of my job. Thanks to the VNFC for creating a space for an outsider like myself to find bits of home in a new country.” - *Sef Masalosalo, Youth Drop In Coordinator*

“I began volunteering at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre's community soup luncheon in 2022. After the pandemic, I was looking for a way to reconnect with my Indigenous community. Volunteering at the luncheon has allowed me to build relationships, be part of community, and share in beautiful, nourishing meals. Three years later, I still leave each week with a full heart. Through this role, I've learned local Indigenous protocols, what it means to move with kindness in community, and how to help create a welcoming space. I typically serve lunch to Elders, which I love. I get to chat with them each week and learn from their stories and wisdom. The community soup luncheon has also been a touchstone for me, connecting me with so many incredible people and programs the Friendship Centre offers. Through these connections, I've had the opportunity to learn beading, help set up a tipi, attend potlucks, and participate in the Indigenous-led Community Learning Program. These experiences have strengthened my sense of belonging as a Métis person in community. Thank you” - *Volunteer Jaden Dedora*

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge our volunteers that have taken the VNFC Community Learning program and flourished with their continued learning in reconciliation and hard work. Their determination in being here with us for four years of providing excellent service for community and staff has been profound. They are true heroes.

Special thanks to all the volunteers that came out in groups of 5 to 10 people: UVic, law students, Microserve, BCI, Island Health, and the District of Saanich

Bruce Parisian Library (BPL)



The Bruce Parisian Library (BPL) has had a successful fiscal year as it works on partnering with other programs and organizations to share valuable resources. Through this work, BPL continues to lead reconciliation within libraries on Southern Vancouver Island. It has continued fruitful partnerships with organizations like Greater Victoria Public Libraries (GVPL) and the University of Victoria's Libraries. The library has also continued its partnership with the Inter-cultural Association, reaching over 100 newcomers to Canada to share about our Indigenous community, the history and impact of colonization in Canada, and how to move forward with Reconciliation in mind.

BPL has also been active in marketing and engaging with the community. By attending events, fairs, as well as hosting a wide array of groups, the library strives to increase our known presence within the Greater Victoria population. We are proud that the BPL has been able to extend its reach to those beginning or continuing their reconciliation journey.

The library is still steadily growing its online presence through the social media sites Facebook and Instagram. This growth has been a beneficial tool in promoting not only the events and programming run by BPL but also programming from other parts of the CAL team and departments within VNFC.

BPL continued two key programs throughout this fiscal year: Daycare Storytime and Jeannies Teatime. The library team is grateful for the volunteers that come in every week to keep these programs running and impactful. Each week the XaXe STELITKEL Daycare brings in upwards of 25 children to be read to by volunteers and GVPL library staff, which allows the children to work on not only listening skills but their literacy as well. The library is also fortunate to have longtime volunteer Jeannie come in each week and provide a welcoming space filled with warm tea and one of the greatest medicines, homemade treats. This has become a staple program at the Centre, seeing both our community and staff come through.

BPL was lucky to be given the opportunity to present at the American Library Association's Super Conference 2024, held this year in San Diego. In partnership with the Greater Victoria Public Libraries, BPL sent two staff to present on working collaboratively with a non-Indigenous organization to further Reconciliation. This received lots of positive feedback from attendees and allowed BPL to reach a greater number of librarians and library workers on an international level. There was also an array of other indigenous focused presentations that staff attended, which provided insight to work structures and possible future programming.

The library continues to prove itself as a great first step for community, partners, and organizations new to VNFC, and has been diligent in our concentration on Canadian Indigenous focused, created or collaborated content that is up to date with current values and information within Canadian Indigenous communities, coast to coast to coast.

With gratitude the library would like to thank our team of Volunteers, whose help makes it possible for us to keep our doors open.

Law Clinic



The VNFC Law Clinic provides free, safe, and culturally appropriate legal services to Indigenous Community members over several programs including a weekly Summary Advice Clinic, the Access Pro-Bono Student Clinic, Joint Service Days, and Wills and Estates Lunch and Learns. Together these programs sought to provide warm and welcoming spaces to access much needed free services.

Summary Advice Clinic

The Summary Advice Clinic is a warm, safe, and welcoming space for Indigenous community members to access legal services. The space is co-hosted by the Community Services Team, a knowledge keeper with the Warriors Program, and our colleagues at the Law Centre. First, Community members are greeted and welcomed into the Cedar Rose Room where there is food and refreshments, and they can meet everyone in a good way. When they are ready, they accompany the Law Centre staff to a private interview room where they can discuss their legal needs in a quiet and confidential space. Over the 2024/2025 fiscal year the Summary Advice Clinic has provided over 434 points of service to 77 community members.

Access Pro Bono Student Law Clinic

The Access Pro Bono Student Law Clinic is a new program that started in the 2024/2025 fiscal year. In Collaboration with a group of law student volunteers and the Community Services team an evening Student Law Clinic ran weekly from November 2024- March 2025. The Clinic provided free legal resources to community members in the evening for those who were unable to access services during the day.

Like the Summary Advice Clinic, this service provided over 25 law students with an onboarding process which included a circle with our knowledge keeper, a tour of the VNFC and overview of our programming, and volunteering with community soup lunch. This provides a much-needed connection with future lawyers and Indigenous community members and spaces. This work has provided legal services for over 30 community members.

Joint Service Days

Joint Service Days are all-day events where Indigenous community members can access a variety of outside service providers at a “one-stop shop”. Service providers who attended and connected with community were; Canadian Revenue Agency, Status Card Clinic, Seniors First, ID Services, Nesting Eagle Boarding Home Claims, Tax, Housing application, Income support, Summary Advice, and Poverty Reduction services. We offered free food and refreshments including a hot lunch for folks to access. Over the two Joint service days we provided over 278 points of service to over 200 community members.

Reconciliation and building safer spaces for Community in the future

Beyond the primary role of connecting community members with legal resources, the secondary role of the Summary Advice Clinic is to provide much need culturally appropriate onboarding for the staff at the Law Centre. Prior to working with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, the staff and students attend an orientation and onboarding day. During the day they participate in a circle with our knowledge keeper, get at tour of the VNFC’s facilities and an overview of programming, and volunteer with soup lunch. This helps the next generation of lawyers to get hands on experience working with Indigenous peoples while giving back to Community, and planting seeds of reconciliation in their future practices. Throughout the fiscal year, over 50 Law Centre staff and students participated in orientation and onboarding.

Community Learning Program (CLP) & Indigenous Safety In Healthcare (ISH)



The VNFC Community Action Learning Team is committed to co-creating culturally grounded, trauma-informed programs rooted in reciprocity and Indigenous ways of knowing. We strive to create inclusive, restorative learning environments that foster growth, healing, and community connection.

Community Learning Program

In 2024–2025, CLP has continued to thrive, delivering 11 cohorts supported by 6 facilitators, and engaging 169 learners. Behind the scenes, we strengthened our internal systems—streamlining communications, updating onboarding documents, and rebalancing facilitator shifts to improve team dynamics. Our team has also strengthened our network of facilitators by welcoming new voices within the VNFC and supporting returning educators through reflective coaching. Our ability to deliver responsive, culturally rooted learning was strengthened through intentional planning, collaboration, and community trust.

A special highlight this year was our thank-you celebration for Tanya Clarmont, held on February 21st during our Friday Soup Lunch. Where her leadership and work were honoured. Tanya has supported 25 CLP cohorts and has continued commitment to mentoring and sustainably supporting fellow facilitators in program delivery.

Indigenous Safety in Healthcare (ISH)

In 2024–2025, ISH continued to offer impactful, culturally safe learning experiences for healthcare professionals. We successfully delivered 11 cohorts, graduating 96 learners. To support program growth, we introduced team-led facilitation and co-facilitator shadowing, which helped train several new facilitators for future delivery.

One of our greatest accomplishments was refining internal processes to enhance participant communication and align team roles with program delivery. With strong new partnerships—such as BC Cancer’s inaugural paying learning—we continue to learn how to sustainably scale our work and programming while staying grounded in our values.



Stats for Community Learning Program

CLP	All-time	2024-2025
# of cohorts	29	11
Graduated	484	169
Waiting list	169	100+

Stats for Indigenous Safety in HealthCare

ISH	All-time	2024-2025
# of cohorts	23	11
Graduated	273	95
Waiting list	100+	70+

Challenges

We continue to face several challenges as we work to grow and sustain our programs:

Funding Limitations: Securing consistent funding remains a challenge, particularly as we seek to expand *Pathways Home* and *Stepping into Story*. Sustaining these initiatives requires long-term investment in culturally grounded, accessible learning.

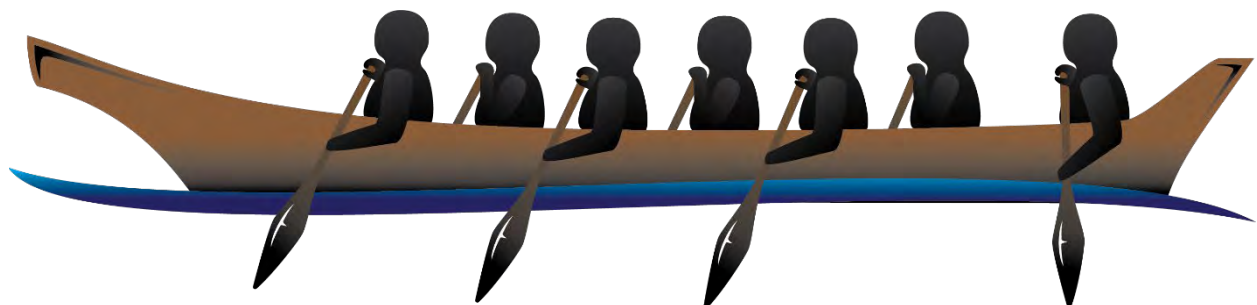
Adapting Program Models: As we explore evolving our programs into a social enterprise model, we face the difficulty of transitioning from free programming to a paid structure without compromising accessibility and community trust.

Space Constraints: We are rapidly outgrowing our current space, which limits our ability to expand programming delivery.

CLP and ISH Participant Quotes

"I was very grateful for the opportunity to have participated in the VNFC ISH program, along with colleagues from BC Cancer - Victoria. The online materials provided excellent background and context for the work, and the in-person sessions were invaluable learning opportunities. Many Indigenous cultural safety courses are only offered online, and when you can participate in-person in an interactive environment, it truly deepens the learning. I think that this course format really helps staff build the skills and confidence they need to deliver more culturally safe, empathetic and patient-centered care." - **Rosy Hartman, Manager, Indigenous Cultural Safety, Indigenous Cancer Control**

"Every aspect of the program is top-notch. Very thorough, professional, ethical, empathetic and beautifully presented. An excellent experience!"



Looking Ahead

As we look toward 2025–2026, our focus is on expanding our spaces, programs, and team to better serve our community. A key priority is strengthening our Community of Practice by deepening collaborations with partners to create more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming learning environments. We aim to increase the availability of free programming for Indigenous learners and build our delivery capacity through the development of a Learning Facilitation Hub—a central space for facilitator training, mentorship, and knowledge exchange. Over the past year, our team has begun the early development of two additional learning pathways: *Stepping into Story: Learning on the Land* and *Pathways Home: Housing Curriculum*. These programs are being co-developed with cultural care, focusing on accessible, land-based, and trauma-informed learning.

New Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the support of our growing network of partners. Thank you to BC Cancer for sending learners to ISH, Island Health for their early support of ISH funding, and PICS for their grants toward *Stepping into Story*. Special thanks to Rachel Mason for her contributions to the development of *Pathways Home*.

We would also like to express our deep gratitude to Elders, Mark Atleo and Shirley Alphonse for their invaluable guidance and knowledge-sharing with our team and learners. And finally, heartfelt thanks to the entire VNFC community for your ongoing support and belief in our programs. As we move forward, we remain committed to growing CLP and ISH programming and increasing support for facilitators—ensuring our work continues to center community, cultural safety, and collaborative learning. We are also focused on strengthening communication with learners, promoting our programs more broadly, and scaling toward a sustainable, social enterprise model that supports financial interdependence while honouring the cultural integrity of our work.



Early Childhood Supports Programs

Aboriginal Infant Development Program

Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program

Indigenous Speech Language Pathology

Neurodiversity

Xa Xe STELIT̓KE-Ł Daycare



Aboriginal Infant Development



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

Staff

Manager AIDP – Jenn Rendall (on leave)
AIDP/Cultural Consultant – Maria Sampson
AIDP Consultant- Eduardo Tahim
AIDP Consultant – Lauren Meeka
AIDP Trainee – coming soon

The AIDP team works with infants up to the age of 5 years old. As of March 2025, we have gone from 2 consultants to 3 consultants. The AIDP team has been doing their best to assist the VNFC as a whole and help bag bread, help in the garden, help the daycare in the backyard and many other tasks the VNFC calls for help with. It has been a year of rebuilding our AIDP team. The AIDP team also delivers all their own client hampers which not only builds connection with clients but also helps the hamper department.

Program Highlights

Maria has been doing fantastic work in collaboration with our ECD group helping parents connect with culture and weaving.

We have the luxury of sneaking into the future to June 2025 and we can see a full team of 4 AIDP trainees/consultant and a manager which is a huge highlight.

Year in Review

AIDP's focus is helping Indigenous infants and families and as we all know, bringing in new life is a blessing that needs to be nurtured as much as possible.

Challenges

Staffing has been a challenge, but I am excited to report that we now have a diverse team with unique skills that they each bring to the program.

Events & Stats

No events this year for AIDP specifically, however, they are always lending hands to VNFC events. The 4 consultants and manager currently hold 34 open files together and have no waitlist.

Success Stories

AIDP has worked as a team with family services, hampers, housing, MCFD and Jordans Principle to assist families in staying together and getting what they need from food services, legal support, medical costs covered, and infant necessities.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you to our funder MCFD. We are grateful for our partnerships with Jordan's Principle, our hamper program, Sooke Family Resource Centre, housing, VNFC soup lunch and our fleet vehicles.

Summary/Conclusion

In conclusion it's been another year of development, but I can happily say we have our positions filled.

Aboriginal Supported Child Development



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

Staff

Manager ASCD – Bianca Gomes (on leave)

Senior ASCD Consultant – Mariel Macasaquit

ASCD Consultant- Marcus Santos

ASCD Consultant - Nadia Robinson

ASCD Consultant – Tera Domeli (has left)

ASCD Kids Action Summer Consultant – Brayden Cook

ASCD Trainee – Taryn Alfred (newest hire)

ASCD Admin – Jordan Stewart

Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter

The ASCD team works with children 1-12 years old. The team supports children and families with their educational needs from daycare to middle school, and also does their best to support physical literacy with Jays Care and Kids Action. A large percentage of the ASCD teams' time is spent in daycare and in school Indigenous Education Plan meetings to help find ways to collaborate with the schools to best support the children. ASCD team members think outside of the box to assist families which means they spend time in nature and in parks if a family is looking for support and observations but do not have a daycare centre. The ASCD team is always quick to help the VNFC with intake, bagging bread and soup lunch, and if they can work in some time to help the VNFC as a whole they jump to it. As with most VNFC departments, ASCD delivers their own client hampers which not only builds connection with clients but also helps the hamper department.

Program Highlights

Mariel has been working on her master's which benefits us in terms of learned observation skills and networking. Both skills she has shared with her ASCD team members. Kari-Ann helped Marcus, Nadia, Tera, Bianca, Jordan and Mariel run a Jays Care Program and by the end they were running it themselves. They worked as a team and worked with what they had to achieve what the children needed.

Back to School Picnic – The ASCD team did everything they could to assist with the back-to-school picnic. ASCD was able to help fund a percentage of the backpacks which not only help our clients but any other children who aren't on our caseloads.

Year In Review

ASCD has had such a successful year helping children stay in daycares and in schools.

Staffing is always a challenge, but we were able to fill positions quickly this year. ASCD events included Jays Care, Kindergarten Readiness Day, and the Kids Action Program. We had a full team almost the whole year, which is always a highlight!

Stats

The 4 consultants and manager currently hold 75 files, and we have 47 on the waitlist which we estimate to be 122 and zero on the waitlist by September 2025 when all staff are trained and ready for full case loads.

Success Stories

The ASCD team has managed to assist approx. 25 daycares and 3 school districts within this year. The ASCD team is full of loving staff who want to do everything they can to make a difference in children's lives.

Participant Quotes

"The child has come so far and is doing so well"

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you to our program funder MCFD. Thank you to Jays Care for funding our baseball program and supplies. We are grateful for our partnerships with School Districts 61,62, 63, Greater Victoria Child Care Centres, Jordan's Principle, our hamper program, soup lunch and our fleet vehicles



Indigenous Speech and Language Pathology



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

Staff

Pat Blundon – Part Time Speech and Language Pathologist

Caitlin Annable – Speech and Language Pathologist

Harmene Dhillon – Part Time Speech and Language Pathologist

Jiji Pyles – Summer Speech and Language Pathologist

Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter

The ISLP program had to get creative this year due to SLPs in Victoria being in high demand. We were able to get two summer SLP to help children who were moving into kindergarten. We were able to continue on with group SLP sessions for those on the waitlist until Winter.

Program Highlights

Two Summer SLPs support children with speech needs before they age out of our program before without being assisted.

Year in Review

Our SLP program was able to thrive with the help of 2 wonderful SLPs who were able to assist us for the summer.

Challenges

We couldn't fill our full time SLP maternity leave position

We had no full time SLPs, as they are in high demand in Victoria with a very specialized skillset.

Events

Health Fairs

Stats

Our full time SLP has 18 files, and we have 15 children on our waitlist. We anticipate getting many of these children off the waitlist in September.

Success Stories

With creative thinking we were able to get all our Pre-K children the support they needed by the start of school (September 2024).

Participant Quotes

"It's nice to see our child socializing"

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

A big thank you to MCFD for providing the funding for our program. A big thank you to Harmene and Jiji for their help, the hours they were able to work with us were incredibly beneficial to our children. Thank you to Pat who recently retired and moved closer to her family; the program wouldn't be what it is without her.

Neurodiversity (FASD)



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

Staff

Genea Thomas – Neurodiversity Keyworker

Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter

This Neurodiversity department has had a keyworker for ¾ of this fiscal year. This has given the Neurodiversity the opportunity to rebuild and develop. Rebuilding after a long vacancy takes time, but every quarter it grows as a department.

Program Highlights

FASD Day was honoured this year.

Neurodiversity participated in the Wellness fair, promoting Non-Alcoholic cocktails.

Year in Review

The neurodiversity program is an active program again and supporting families. Staffing is always a challenge! We observed FASD day this year.

Stats

The Neurodiversity Keyworker holds 16 files and no waitlist.

Participant Quotes

“Thank you!”

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Big thank you to our funder MCFD and to those we partnered with this year: Saanich Neighbourhood house and our VNFC hamper program



Xa Xe STELITKEL_Daycare



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

Staff

Jordan – Responsible Adult
Eliza – Early Childhood Educator Assistant
Pawandeep - Early Childhood Educator
Valentina - Early Childhood Educator Assistant
Angela - Early Childhood Educator Assistant
Lina Early Childhood Educator Assistant
Jungthy - Early Childhood Educator
Juyon - Early Childhood Educator
Megan - Early Childhood Educator
Yuko- Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Makoto - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Leosel - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Rafaela - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Loida - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Gurpreet - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Fe - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Tristan - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Rebecca - Early Childhood Educator Infant Toddler
Sue Ann – Team Lead – Infant/Toddlers
Christina – Team Lead 3-5 year olds
Eileen – Wisdom Keeper
Daniela Santos – Manager
Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter

The daycare program prioritizes Indigenous children's entry to the program followed by staff and then siblings of children who attend the centre followed by the greater Victoria community members. We are required to prioritize Indigenous children as an Aboriginal Head Start Program. The daycare is free to Indigenous children and cost \$200 a month for non-indigenous children, AHS does take this money to put back into their program.

Program Highlights

Providing the best care possible to our children is our top priority and we have been able to do this by having each of our rooms staff a member above minimum daycare licensing requirements. This allows the children to have more individual supports in the classrooms and helps prevent teacher burn out. We also have worked hard on scheduling to ensure staff can have two 15-minute breaks and an hour lunch.

Year in Review

We are fully staffed and have a full daycare program of healthy and happy children. Funding is always a challenge! Events included a Daycare Graduation Ceremony, and Daycare Winter Celebration.

Stats

We have 59 daycare spots, and all of them are filled.

Success Stories

We have had a huge increase in Indigenous families interested and joining our program.

Participant Quotes

“Thank you for making culture a focus”

“My daughter came home sing one of our fun dance songs”

“These language buttons are so cool, and the kids can push them”

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you to our main funder Aboriginal Head Start. Thank you to MCFD for the support we continuously receive. This year we were incredibly blessed to have support from the Rina M. Biden Foundation without whom we would not have such a beautiful outdoor space.

Our daycare has become a space where our staff and children feel supported and have their cultural welcomed and encouraged. We can all learn something from each other if we pay attention to the lessons being presented.



Family Development & Food Security Programs

Awakening the Warrior Within

Awakening the Woman Warrior Within

Career, Employment & Education Team

Early Childhood Development

Family Services Team

Hamper Program

Jordan's Principle

Kitchen

Parent Supports

Young Warriors & IYFL SD61

Youth & Community Leadership

Awakening the Warrior Within

Staff:

Glenn Patterson - Facilitator

Sharon Neal – Assistant Facilitator



Program Overview:

The “Awakening the Warrior Within” program has been developed to support Indigenous men, 19+ years of age, who are ready and willing to examine their relationship with family violence. The intent of the program is to provide an opportunity for Indigenous men to gain a deeper understanding of family violence and its impact on self, family, and community.

This year, *Awakening the Warrior Within* continued to make a powerful impact, running six cohorts that met twice a week over six-week sessions. Approximately 60 new participants engaged in the program, with many returning graduates also choosing to rejoin for continued connection and growth.

Each cohort explored a wide range of topics, shaped by the needs and voices of the participants. Common themes included community leadership, family dynamics, grief and loss, parenting, and violence. Several groups had the opportunity to participate in art therapy sessions with Shona, which provided a meaningful outlet for self-expression and healing.

Culture and ceremony remained foundational to the program. Participants engaged in traditional practices such as sweat lodge ceremonies, drum-making, teepee set-up, and pipe ceremonies. For the ninth consecutive year, Glen and Sharon supported a group of men in attending the Sundance ceremony in Merritt, deepening their cultural and spiritual journey.

“I am grateful to all the men who have decided 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 generations as we continue to break the cycle of violence for nothing. They are all truly Awakened Warriors.” – Glenn Patterson, facilitator



Awakening the Woman Warrior Within

Respectfully submitted by: Raven Hartley, Family Wellness Service Manager

Staff:

Julie Bell – Program Facilitator

Program Overview:

This program for women who have experienced violence was developed to support Indigenous Women 19+ years of age who are ready and willing to examine their relationship with family violence. The intent of the program is to provide an opportunity for Indigenous Women to gain a deeper understanding of family violence and its impact on self, family, and community.

This year, the Awakening the Woman Warrior Within program supported and empowered over 150 women and LGBTQ2S community members. Alongside our core curriculum we were proud to offer a range of additional opportunities including gym passes, self-defence training, a Human Trafficking Prevention workshop and Bug Out! Natural Disaster preparedness training. Participants also had the chance to attend Sweat lodge and Sundance ceremonies – experiences that many embraced.

One of the challenges we encountered was difficulty in hiring a second facilitator. This limited our ability to run as many program cohorts as originally planned. Despite this, the program remained strong and impactful, continuing to provide a culturally grounded and trauma-informed space for healing, growth and connection.

Success Story:

Upon starting the program, one of the women shared that she had been going through a hard time. Her partner had passed from toxic drug supply; she had just started renting a room and was struggling with her own sobriety. During the span of the program, she shared that she had started volunteering with an organization and that was keeping her busy. She successfully completed the program and a couple of months later, she came in and shared that she had been hired at the organization that she'd been volunteering with, she moved into her own place and was still sober. She credited her success to the Awakening the Woman Warrior Within program.



Career, Employment, and Education Resources (CEER)



Respectfully submitted by Sophia Gu, CEER Team Lead

Staff

Sophia Gu, CEER Team Lead

Alexandria Dubois-Hache, Administrative Assistant/Data Entry

April Gallicano, Youth Career & Education Guide

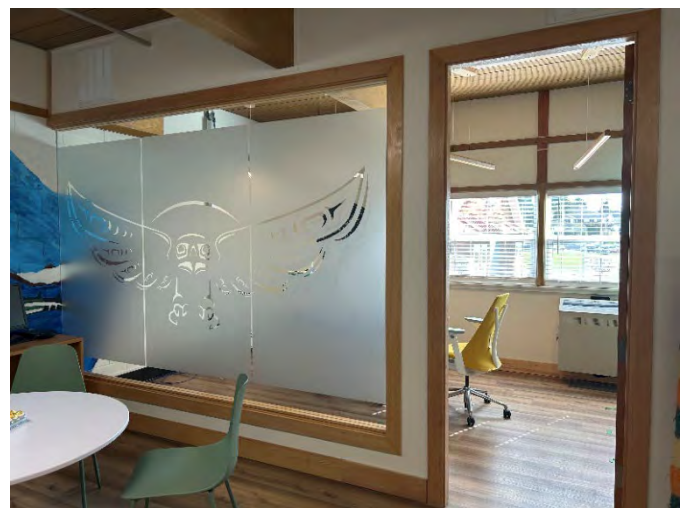
Bryan Adair, Career & Education Guide

Herman Henry, Indigenous Liaison & Career Transition Guide

CEER provides career development, education and skills training, and employment assistance to urban Indigenous youth and adults in the Greater Victoria area. These services are offered in a culturally supportive atmosphere to help community members achieve their employment goals while developing a sense of focus and self-confidence needed to compete successfully in the labour market.

Program Highlights

- \$116K renovation to create new CEER Career Corner
- 438 community members served at Indigenous Job Club
- 13 group trainings hosted for various certifications
- 392 clients who accessed CEER training and/or sponsorship
- 86 attendees at our inaugural Indigenous Scholarship Night event in January



Year in Review

Renovation Project

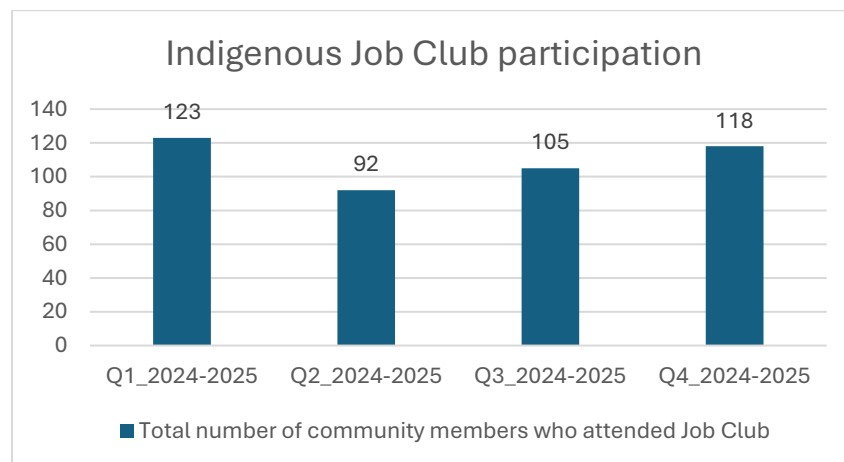
VNFC was awarded one-time-only funds to renovate CEER office space into a career resource centre & learning space. Construction began in early January and was completed in March, with grand opening scheduled for end of April. The new *CEER Career Corner* will allow us to offer more drop-in services and small group skills training/workshops, while also providing a calm, inviting environment for community members to utilize computers & connect with learning resources.

Indigenous Job Club

Weekly drop-in program for job seekers

Through our drop-in Job Club program, community members are able to access brief services for employment & training, such as 1:1 career counselling, help with job search/resume/ cover letter, access to driving lessons & group trainings, bus tickets/passes, interview clothing, work gear for a new job, and cultural supports.

In May 2024, we began introducing information sessions, where we invite local employers and education/training providers to present and network with community. This fiscal year, we hosted a total of 13 info sessions at Job Club and served a total of 438 community members!



Group Trainings and Certifications

Funded courses for skills development and industry recognized certificates

This fiscal year, we were proud to host a total of 13 group trainings, including:

- 2 First Aid & CPR trainings
- 1 FoodSafe level 1 training
- 1 Forklift training
- 4 Driver's L trainings
- 3 Microsoft Office/Excel level 1 courses
- 2 Microsoft Office/Excel level 2 courses

We also sponsored individual community members for various certifications including First Aid, Foodsafe, Serving It Right, Selling It Right, and traffic control person/flagging, 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.

Postsecondary Education

Funding for Trades, Certificates, Diplomas, and Degrees

Over the course of 2024-25, our CEER team funded and supported 45 postsecondary students in a broad range of programs, from nursing to carpentry to early childhood education. Supports provided include funding for tuition & books, scholarship resources, connections to other VNFC programs, and guidance when challenges arise. We continue to be uplifted and inspired by our sponsored students who are charging new paths for themselves, their families, and their home communities.

Youth Employment Initiatives

Providing youth-specific programs and services

In May 2024, we hired our first Youth Career & Education Guide, specializing in working with youth ages 15-30 on their employment goals. In collaboration with Construction Foundation BC, we hosted a 5-week ReFRAME youth employment program in September and October 2024 for carpentry & landscaping. In January 2025, we also held an Indigenous Scholarship Night with participation across all three local school districts.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

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

- WorkBC Centre Victoria
- John Howard Society of Victoria
- University of Victoria First People's House
- Camosun College
- Camosun Coastal Centre
- Construction Foundation BC
- Island Health Volunteer Program
- Foundry Victoria
- Tsawout Nation
- Esquimalt Nation
- Alert First Aid
- Total Support Solutions
- Drivewise
- Serge's Real Life Driving School
- Victoria Industrial Safety Training
- Mark's Work Warehouse
- KMS Tools



The CEER team is proud of all that we've accomplished together this year, in service of community. We look forward to bringing more programs, services, and events to VNFC in the year to come!



Family Services

Respectfully Submitted by **Brenda Freeman**, BSW, Team Leader, Family Services Team



Staff:

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

The Family Services Team (FST) believe that having our Urban Indigenous Families unify in a healthy way by keeping our Urban Indigenous children out of the child welfare system. We also advocate for our Urban Indigenous Children to return to their families and communities. Our vision is to create stronger Urban Indigenous Families with respect and dignity, to bring back the traditional way of life, and by creating a stronger balance in a physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual way of life. Our primary goal is to advocate for families involved with Ministry of Children and Family Development. The secondary goal is to assist with the legal system, government issues/paperwork, child custody, parenting laws, domestic violence, and reconnect to culturally appropriate resources while creating a circle of supports. We keep families together by helping them develop adequate skills and abilities to cope with daily family living, and provide support and services to facilitate healthy, strong and connected families. Priority is given to families experiencing Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) involvement.

The FST believes in assisting families through a balanced approach by empowering them on their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual healing journey. We support by:

- Having ongoing check-ins with community members at least once a week with a home visit, text, telephone calls, social messaging, and office visits for community members/professionals.
- Develop, implement and complete an individual risk reduction plan.
- Support with skill development, education, mentorship, and cultural continuity.
- Assists in parenting skills, communication skills, budgeting, life skills, nutrition, housing, and social assistance.
- Provides traditional and cultural values as related to emotional support, spiritually and culturally.

Program Statistics:

The FST carries a case load from March/2025:

- 99 files with 58 active (new intakes or returning client), 5 inactive (haven't heard from their clients in over three months) and 36 closing files (haven't had contact within 6 months, a closing letter is sent out to individual families).

Status Card Clinic Attendees

Dates:	April 8, 2024	June 10, 2024	August 24 2024	Nov. 13, 24	March 5, 2025	Total
Amount:	93	86	80	77	94	430

The VNFC Intake office is open from 1-4 every day to support community walking in, phoning or emailing for support. The intake staff assess the needs of the community members and figure out the best resources or referrals that will best support the need. Referrals can be within VNFC or with outside agencies. If the need is outside of what we can offer, then the intake worker finds resources and other avenues for the community members to access. The intake staff has seen or talked with over 3000 community members seeking support. Earlier in the year we decided to make the position full time to support any brief or urgent needs that occur at the centre before intake office hours.



Hamper Program



Staff:

Jonathan Smith – Hamper Lead

Wren Springle – Hamper Assistant

Program Overview:

This year, the Hamper Program continued to support food security for Indigenous community members across South Vancouver Island, with a focus on providing healthy and diverse options. We transitioned from pre-packed hampers to a pantry-style pick-up model, offering participants greater choice. We have continued our delivery services to community members with physical or mental health barriers, as well as to local shelters. We have given out over 9000 hampers during the year.

We are grateful for the strong partnerships that have enhanced our program's reach and quality. Key collaborators this year included Zambri's Restaurant, Berryman's Farm, Farm and Field Butchers, Islands West Produce, and Sysco. A special acknowledgment goes to Backpack Buddies, our largest ongoing donor, whose monthly food contributions have been instrumental. We are also very lucky to have two volunteers that come in for a couple of hours each week, thank you Brittany and Tobias!

The Hamper Program works closely with all VNFC departments to ensure wraparound support for our families. Through this collaborative approach, we continue to strengthen food sovereignty and community wellness.

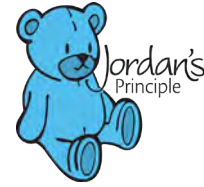
Yearly Highlight:

In December of 2024, the Hamper program provided 250 Christmas dinner hampers to community members. The boxes included a turkey or ham, potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, gravy, pie and frozen vegetables. A big thank you to Daryl, our Sysco representative as well as our volunteers for making this possible.

"I get to eat healthy and balanced meals because of the VNFC hamper. I wouldn't be able to have fresh fruit and vegetables if I didn't get the VNFC hamper." -Agnes Seward



Jordan's Principle – Service Coordination



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

Staff:

Angela Heaton – Jordan's Principle Senior Service Coordinator

Danielle Low – Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator

Kelsey Sutton – Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator

Vacant – Jordan's Principle ARC Administrator

Lisa Raynes – Program Assistant

Program Overview

The Jordan's Principle team provides comprehensive support in preparing and submitting both individual and group funding requests to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), while assisting families in navigating complex service systems. We work closely with families, caregivers, and community providers to ensure culturally safe, coordinated care—advocating for support when gaps in health, education, or social services are identified.

We also assist families in connecting to essential resources, including allied health and mental health services, mobility and medical equipment, assistive technology, tutoring, respite, and cultural programming. In addition, we help families understand their rights under Jordan's Principle and support them in accessing the care their children need. Our team remains committed to reducing barriers and working collaboratively with ISC to uphold the full intent of Jordan's Principle for First Nations children and youth in our region.

Year in Review

This past year has been a significant one for our program. To meet growing demand and complexity of service needs, our team expanded to include an additional Service Coordinator, a Program Assistant, and an additional ARC Administrator. These roles have greatly enhanced our capacity to respond quickly and efficiently to new requests and to manage the administrative follow-through of previously approved supports.

In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, our team supported approximately 659 First Nations children and youth through individual requests. We submitted 458 new individual requests to ISC, which resulted in 168 new approvals for services and supports within the fiscal year. Our team also coordinated 18 group requests supporting an additional 1343 children and youth across South Vancouver Island. These group requests included services such as dental and orthodontic care, allied health therapies, educational assessments, and culturally-based camp programming.

Challenges

Navigating Jordan's Principle remains both rewarding and complex. This year, our team experienced significant delays in decision-making from ISC, which impacted timely access to supports. Additionally, shifts in national operational policies resulted in a narrowed scope of eligible supports and increased the need for medical documentation. Inconsistent communication regarding the interpretation of request categories added further uncertainty and stress for many families. As a result, prolonged waiting periods and escalating documentation requirements often left families feeling overwhelmed and disheartened.

Events

Our team participated in several community outreach and engagement events in partnership with VNFC and external partners. Notably, we hosted an on-site resource booth and facilitated meaningful family engagement activities while attending the Songhees Resource Fair, National Indigenous Peoples Day, VNFC Care Fair, TSAWOUT Parent's night, and VNFC LGBTQ2S+ Youth Gathering.

Success Stories

Throughout the year, we were privileged to support a range of impactful requests that made a meaningful difference in children's lives. We secured group funding to support a Nation's cultural camp, allowing children to deepen their connection to culture and language. We coordinated daily support work for a child in kinship placement, enabling stability and continuity of care. We also provided therapeutic equipment and assistive technology to children with complex neurodivergent needs. In addition, we helped facilitate emergency relocation and short-term rental assistance for families facing housing crises, ultimately preventing homelessness. Each of these supports played a vital role in a child's ability to thrive, heal, and stay connected to their community and identity.

"You are such a great support. I really feel like I might have given up on trying to figure out some of this stuff without your help." – Parent of a child with ASD

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We are grateful for the support and collaboration of our many community partners. This includes local Nations and cultural knowledge holders, regional school districts, numerous service providers, and allied health professionals. We also appreciate the efforts of community programs that facilitated referrals and connections to families in need of Jordan's Principle support.

We extend our gratitude to ISC's BC Region team for their ongoing partnership, and to the leadership of VNFC for their steady guidance, which continues to support the growth and impact of our work.

The Jordan's Principle team remains deeply committed to upholding the rights of First Nations children to access the services they need, when they need them. As demand continues to grow, we remain focused on strengthening our capacity, advocating for systemic improvement, and walking alongside families with compassion and cultural safety at the heart of all we do.



VNFC Community Kitchen

Staff:

Carrie Pollard, Executive Chef
Gerald Riviere
Ava Pollard
Leonard Desjarlais
Amarin Hennessey
Julio Perea- Arequipa
Carol Stocker



Program Overview:

Providing meals for Victoria Native Friendship Centre community members who attend our Daycare, Early Childhood Development, Youth, and Elder's programs as well as for the Community Soup Lunch, Community Learning Program and the Shelter Program (naming just a few) has been both challenging and successful. We have served over 60,000 meals to programming this year. Our soup lunch averages between 160-200 guests each Friday. With client numbers and programs continuing to grow and food security being even more challenging, the Kitchen Team works diligently together and constantly learning from one another to provide nutritious, fresh and creative meals sourced from ingredients from a variety of sources.

During the Summer months we receive fresh organic produce from local farms, plus our own community garden. Our wholesale partners continue to work hard to provide the best pricing. We look forward to connecting with Mitch Hawes from BCause which will enable the Kitchen to keep up with demand. Being able to make more connections for better food prices is always a priority. As the centre grows, we must continue to keep up with good, healthy food.

Our success story for this year would be that our team in the kitchen is working, communicating, and learning from one another. We provide over six thousand meals each month for VNFC clients. With all this happening, we can continue to grow and provide good healing food to keep up with our ever-expanding Victoria Native Friendship Centre needs.

Healing. Kindness. Caring. Giving. All are put into what we create in the Kitchen, with Love always.



Young Warriors

Respectfully Submitted by Rebecca Mabee



Staff

Cecilia – Program Coordinator

Montana – Program Coordinator

Elder Jean Smith

Young Warriors is an empowerment program developed to support the lack of programming for ages 7-12 in Victoria. Topics explored are Feelings, Bullying, Relationships and Boundaries, Health and Wellness and Culture. Each topic includes learning and discussion, with participant input and thoughts. The program has been held on-line, with tablets for those without the technology. Each week our coordinators drop off a bag with the week's supplies and snacks.

Year in Review

We provided four cohorts this year as well as spring break, summer and Home Alone programming.

This year for Spring break from March 18th to March 28th, 2024, we had a total of fourteen (14) participants join us throughout the two weeks. 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, such as Malahat Skywalk, mini golfing and Goldstream.

During the summer staff facilitated Home Alone training for 8–10-year-old children. The Home Alone training taught House key rules, Strangers don't have to look strange, Telephone is your lifeline, Feeling Scared, Emergencies, In case of fire, storms/natural disaster, Basic First Aid and Internet Safety. These topics equip children to stay at home by themselves. We had 9 participants for the first week, and 7 participants for the second week.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you to Kaitlin McManus for proving art therapy sessions within the program. Thank you to our funders.



Indigenous Youth and Family Liaison SD61

Respectfully Submitted by Rebecca Mabee

Staff

Shiloh – Esquimalt Highschool

Sage – Quadra Elementary and Shorline Middle School

These staff provide liaison support with a holistic lens to Urban Indigenous youth and families within the schools. The liaisons create a relationship with school staff to provide wrap around supports. The role includes being an advocate and liaison for students between home and the school environment. During spring break and summer break the liaisons support work at VNFC.

Shiloh and Sage had a good year connecting with the students.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Principals and staff at the respective schools. Thank you, Indigenous Education Department.



Youth And Community Leadership

Gratefully submitted by Marcus McCullough, Youth Program Lead

Staff

Kailyn Johnson – Manager

Marcus McCullough – Program Lead

Sef Masalosalo – Youth Program Coordinator

Leo Devonshire – Youth Program Coordinator

Katrina Waldron – Youth Support

Claryssa Duerden – Youth Support

Breanna Durham – Youth Support

Aly Waddell - Youth Support



The Youth Team is comprised of highly experienced and passionate workers that foster an environment of inclusion and support for urban Indigenous youth aged 12-25 years old. The two programs under the Youth Team are Youth Support Services, providing wrap-around services, and the RAVE Youth Drop-In Centre. The third program, IndigeMind, lost its funding and ceased operations on April 1st, 2025. Each full-time Youth Support Worker carries an average caseload of 15-20 youth, maintaining weekly appointments, with high-risk cases accessing support two times a week. The RAVE Youth Drop-in Centre focuses on providing culturally relevant, fun, and educational opportunities for youth aged 12-18 years old.

Program Highlights

2024-2025 was a year of change and growth for the Youth Team. Marcus McCullough joined as Program Lead in May 2024, while Leo Devonshire and Breanna Durham came aboard in January 2025 as Youth Program Coordinator and Youth Support. Marilyn Gallic and Montana Abbott left on April 1st to pursue new opportunities when IndigeMind lost its funding. In March 2025, Marcus and Kailyn brought ten youth to Kamloops for the annual Gathering Our Voices conference to learn alongside other Indigenous youth from across BC. In February 2025, the entire Youth Team came together to support our own event, the 2Spirit Gathering, with just under two-hundred school-aged youth from School Districts 61, 62, and 63 coming for a day of workshops and presentations, celebrating diversity and inclusion along with their peers. This event would not have been possible without the support of every department at the VNFC, as we booked every room and space at the Centre for the throng of excited and laughing youth in our hallways and spaces. In August 2024, four staff and ten youth descended on Pine Point near Youbou to close out Summer Camp with four days of camping. Seeing the youth frolicking in the lake, exploring the nearby rainforest, and telling stories around the campfire is something all the participants will remember for the rest of their lives.



Success Stories

Working with youth has its share of incredibly difficult moments but the successes are always more pronounced and palpable. There were several one-on-one Youth Support clients that “aged out” of our program successfully over the past year, with two that really stand out. One was able to secure long-term housing for themselves and their partner, while also gaining full time employment near their new residence. This youth has been involved with the foster care system for much of their life, and having gained the skills and self-confidence to empower themselves is why our program exists. Our entire team raises their hands to this, now young adults, life journey. Secondly, after having built a relationship based on trust and respect, this youth successfully re-entered high school after two years of not attending. They were able to successfully graduate, and the pride and self-esteem they have for themselves now shines as bright as their smile.



Partnerships and Acknowledgments

The Youth Team would like to formally raise our hands to the following individuals, organizations, businesses and non-profits: Chancellor Amos-Cowichan Cycles, Tyler Smith-Saanich Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, Mike Lawrence-Vancouver Island Fishing For Fun, Influence Board Shop, Holly Reid-Rehabilitation Sciences Graduate Program | Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Khaled Alhomsi-Crag X Indoor Climbing Centre, AVI Health and Community Services



Summary

Throughout the past year the Youth Team has gone through many changes. We have onboarded two incredible staff members while also losing two incredible staff members to a loss in funding. We have seen our points of contact and attendance numbers rise tremendously (almost 11000 points of contact!) even though we were short staffed for half of the calendar year. Our team has grown together, and this is reflected in the work we do in the community. Youth that were more reserved or shy are now joking and laughing during programming and the feedback from parents and guardians are saying they see this change in their youths when they are at home or in school. The work we do is often incredibly challenging and difficult to come to terms with, but to see the growth and successes of the youth we serve has no equivalent. To be positive role models and advocates for some of the most vulnerable in our community is the foundational core of the Youth Team, and our foundation is strong. We raise our hands to everyone in the community that has helped and assisted our team to carry on the work we all do. Huy ch q'u Siem!

Parent Supports

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



Staff

Rebecca- Manager

Delwyn – Family Support Worker

Marsha- CAPC Family Support Worker

Amaya – Family Support Worker

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 (0-6 years) and their families in a secure comfortable, culturally supportive and respectful environment.

Early Childhood Development (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, and available resources to support families in their efforts to raise healthy children.
- To educate Indigenous 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.

Year in Review

Our program provides a space for children to play safe and space for parents to explore their creativity. We provide materials for parents to work with their hands and create with freedom. When people work with their hands, they begin to release emotions and thoughts, which then brings out conversations with staff and other parents. We have had a busy year with many new families joining programming. We try to offer a range of crafts and workshops during the year, as well listen to what the parents would like to do or see in programming. This year the parents worked on wool basket weaving, ribbon skirts and shirts, cedar weaving, and rattles. The parents sewed backpacks and clothing for their children as well.

We offered an infant first aid class, our summer park days and full Christmas dinner hampers. Elder Jean Smith came and did a Devil's Club workshop and our VNFC garden team gave a workshop on tea blending. Speech Therapist Caitlin joined the program on Thursdays to answer any child speech questions and provide support for speech. Our program also offers open house days during the year for staff. This is an opportunity for staff to connect and create.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Thank you, Laura, Sadie, Jen and Morgan, our great Island Health nurses and dental staff that support the program every Wednesday, as well as our partners:

- Cobs Bread
- MCFD
- BC Farmers Market
- 1000x 5 books and all the volunteers who sort and bag all the books.



Properties, Homes & Living Supports Department Programs

Properties & Housing Team

Shelter



Properties and Housing Supports



Respectfully submitted by: Raelene Curry, Housing Operations Manager

Staff:

Stacy Bauer, Director of Properties, Homes, and Living Supports

Kelsey Acheson, Housing Support Worker

Min Chen, Properties Administrator

Michelle Ten Oever, Housing Support Worker

Program Overview

The Properties and Housing Supports (PHS) team operates a total of 77 housing units across various property sites, ranging from studio to three-bedroom units. These homes serve a diverse population including singles, couples, and families. Our commitment is centered around supporting the Urban Indigenous Community, offering both housing and wraparound supports that focus on sustainability, cultural connection, and dignity.

Our Housing Support staff provide a broad range of services, including:

- Rental subsidy supports
- Start-up kits for new tenants
- Landlord liaison and relationship management
- Homelessness prevention services
- Tenant advocacy and barrier reduction
- Application assistance days
- Ongoing culturally safe tenant support programming

Program Highlights for 2024–2025

This fiscal year presented a number of challenges due to significant staff turnover, yet the team demonstrated outstanding resilience and dedication, successfully maintaining and even expanding our community programs. Key highlights include:

- Life Skills & Wellness Programming:
 - o Cooking classes
 - o Budgeting and financial literacy workshops
 - o Health and Wellness Education
- Cultural & Community Engagement:
 - o Thanksgiving community meals
 - o Spring BBQ gatherings
 - o Holiday workshops for children
 - o Land-based teachings featuring traditional medicines, tools, and materials
- Food Security Initiatives:
 - o Hamper distribution programs
 - o Access and referrals to local food banks
 - o One-time gift card emergency support
- Homelessness Prevention:
 - o Issued 408 rental subsidies to prevent evictions and support housing stability
 - o Active advocacy and support for those at risk of homelessness

Despite the challenges, tenant retention remained high, with minimal turnover across our properties. This stability is a testament to both the strength of our supports and the sense of community that has been cultivated.

Community Partnerships

Our successes would not be possible without the incredible partnerships we maintain across the housing and service network. We extend heartfelt gratitude to the following organizations whose collaboration strengthens the fabric of our work:

Housing Partners:

- M'akola Housing
- BC Housing
- Greater Victoria Housing Society
- CRD Housing
- Pacifica Housing
- Saint Vincent De Paul
- Luma Housing
- Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)
- Reaching Home & Indigenous Reaching Home

Community Organizations & Supports:

- ACEH
- Surrounded by Cedars
- Island Métis
- Oasis
- Solid Outreach
- QomQem
- PHS
- OPS
- Cool Aid
- Burnside Gorge
- BCANDS
- Beacon Community Association

Local Indigenous Housing Teams:

- Kosapsun Nation
- Songhees Nation
- Tsawout Nation
- Tsartlip Nation

Additional Community Contributors:

- Credit Counselling Society
- Sleep Country
- Holiday Inn
- Hotel Zed
- Habitat for Humanity
- Women in Need
- Motel 6
- Metro Inn

Without the collective effort of these partners, many in our community would fall through the widening gaps in a complex and often inaccessible housing system. The PHS team remains steadfast in our mission to provide safe, stable, and culturally supportive housing. We acknowledge the deep resilience of our tenants and community and recognize that our impact is magnified through the relationships we build—with each other, our clients, and our partners. We raise our hands in deep gratitude to everyone who has walked alongside us this past year.

VNFC Shelter Program



Respectfully submitted by Diego Enciso

Staff:

Stacy Bauer, Director of Properties, Homes & Living Supports

Diego Enciso, Shelter Manager

Overnight Supervisors: Jon C., Ustat K., Davis T.

Shelter Cook: Julio P.

Shelter Support Workers: David A., Ben H., Brian M., Andres M., Nicolas O., Brin R., Lillian S., Suman S., Davis T.

Housing Outreach – Noah P.

Over the past year, the VNFC Shelter has continued to offer a safe, structured, and culturally supportive space for people experiencing homelessness. We operate as a high-barrier shelter, meaning we keep clear expectations around safety, respect, and behavior — and we've seen how that structure helps our guests feel more secure and supported. Here's a snapshot of what we've accomplished together. This year, we supported a total of **7,057 guests**.

Here's how that breaks down:

- **4,448** men
- **2,606** women
- **3** guests identified as other

Guest Engagement

- **Regular guests:** 4,035
- **Non-regular guests:** 2,251
- **New guests:** 159
- **Referrals from other agencies:** 92
- **Waitlisted individuals:** 297
- **Guest Housed:** 16

These numbers show that many guests rely on us regularly, and word is getting out — people are being referred to us, and unfortunately, we still have a waitlist. The need is real and growing.

Community Access

- **Calls for service:** 142
- **Walk-ups:** 79

People continue to find us and reach out when they need help — whether through a phone call or simply showing up at the door where they were directed to one of our pickup locations.

Health & Safety

- **Medical needs supported:** 31
- **Incident reports:** 33
- **Boundary conversations:** 61

Our team works hard to support guests through challenges. When things come up — and they do — we handle them with respect, clear communication, and care.

Services We Provided

We met many basic needs this year, which helped people feel more human and supported:

- **Showers:** 1,084
- **Laundry loads:** 165
- **Clothing items given out:** 265
- **Bus tickets handed out:** 89
- **Meals served:** 17,083
- **Leftover meals shared with the community:** 1,179

Food remains our most accessed service, and we're proud to have served more than 17,000 meals this year.



Our Community Partners

We couldn't do this work alone — we're lucky to have strong partnerships with people and organizations that care as much as we do. Huge thanks to:

- **Soap for Hope** – for providing hygiene supplies
- **Wear2Start** – for helping guests with clothing
- **Saanich Police Department** – for working with us to support safety in a respectful way

And to our housing providers partners who help guests take the next step:

- **Our Place Society**
- **Pacifica Housing**
- **Cool Aid Society**
- **PHS Community Services**
- **SOLID Outreach**

These partnerships ensure continuity of care and increase our guests' access to broader community support.

Funding and Logistical Support

We are thankful to **BC Housing** for their continued funding, which makes our shelter operations possible and allows us to maintain consistent staffing, infrastructure, and services.

We also extend our appreciation to:

- **Central Baptist Church** – for generously offering space to support guest pickups
- **BC Transit** – allowing us to use their bus stop for picking up our guests.

Their generosity has directly improved shelter operations and guest safety.

We would like to express our gratitude to the various VNFC departments for their continued collaboration, flexibility, and commitment to supporting the Shelter Program. The cooperation between Health and Wellness, Housing, Cultural Support, Kitchen, and Facilities has contributed significantly to the strength and success of the shelter, ensuring that guests receive comprehensive care grounded in Indigenous values.

This year has been full of growth, learning, and impact. We've served thousands of meals, connected hundreds of people to services, and worked hard to create a safe space where our guests feel seen and supported.

Thank you to our staff, partners, funders, and community for walking this journey with us. We're excited to keep building on what we've created together.

Wellness & Health Department Programs



Camas Lelum Primary Care Centre



Respectfully Submitted by Grey Showler, Director of Wellness and Health

Primary Care Team

Medical Office Lead: Kaleih Lafleur

Medical Office Assistants: Jessica Gray, Anton Recalma

Registered Nurses: Ally Dodds, Torrie Tennant

Nurse Practitioners: Tarah Reece, Danielle Linton, Luara Hanson, Gabrielle Parizeau, Sarah Nishimura, Elizabeth Lofts

Physicians: Frank Nezil, Kate Elliott, Bilal Bagha, Ami Brosseau, Emma Preston, Lourens Perold

Camas Lelum Primary Care Centre delivers culturally safe, longitudinal primary health care to urban Indigenous community living in the region. Our team provides care at our new Centre at the Gorge Plaza, at the VNFC, and in community at Songhees, Kosapsum, Sci'Anew and Pacheedaht Nations. Our integrated team of providers works with community of all ages to delivery quality care that is person-centred and integrates Indigenous beliefs and practice. We currently serve over 2500 community members.

Program Highlights

Camas Lelum officially opened at our new clinic site at 2951 Tillicum Rd in May, 2024. Building on decades of work by Dr Frank Nezil, NPs Francoise Juneau and Danielle Linton, and with the support of the Ministry of Health, Island Health and the Victoria Primary Care Network, the VNFC renovated a 3800 square foot space at the Gorge Plaza to create the region's first primary care service dedicated to urban Indigenous community. We are honoured to be given the name Camas Lelum by respected Songhees Elder Butch Dick, and to have our space filled with the art of Jamin Zurosky, Bradley Dick, and Joselyn Charley. In addition to our team of MOAs, RNs, NPs and physicians, Camas Lelum also provides space for the Indigenous Midwives, volunteer physiotherapy, and a PCN pharmacist and social worker to create a low-barrier, integrated service. Our team also works closely with the VNFC PCN Indigenous Wellness Providers and the VNFC Wellness Team to provide wrap around care that honours community members and their families.



Year in Review

In addition to moving into our new location, the Camas Lelum team grew adding new physicians, NPs, and 2 new RNs. This has allowed us to attach more patients to care and to expand our care to include more preventative healthcare and support for long term conditions like diabetes and heart conditions. We have also increased our service to the Nations and at the VNFC with our team working in each community at least 2 days each week in addition to Camas Lelum.

With the expansion of our space, we have become a hub for urban Indigenous care in the region. The Indigenous Midwives provide a weekly clinic, providing critical care to expecting families, who are then attached to a long term provider once their baby is born. A PCN pharmacist and social worker also work out of Camas Lelum on a regular basis removing the need for our patients to be referred to another service for care. Camas Lelum has become a “one stop” location for most care needs.

With generous support from the FNHA, we were also able to purchase an ultrasound machine, ECG and other important medical equipment further reducing the need for patients to be seen elsewhere for care.

Challenges

Meeting community demand is major challenge for us, even as we have added new providers. There are thousands of Indigenous community members who either do not have a primary care provider, or who have a provider who is unable to meet their needs as an Indigenous person. As the only Centre in the region dedicated to serving Indigenous community, there is a huge demand for our services. In addition, our model of care is to provide longer appointments and to accommodate whole families, so it takes us a little longer to work with our patients than in non-Indigenous settings where patients are often limited to short appointments with a focus on a single health issue.

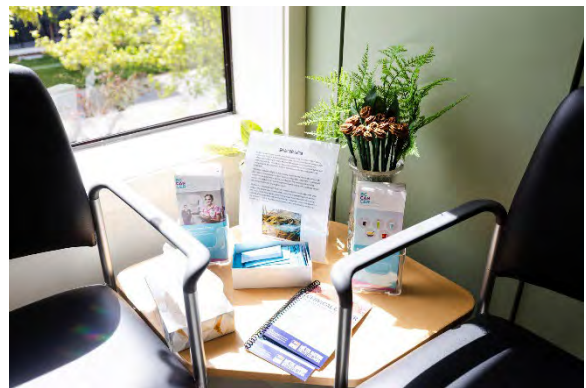
An additional challenge is funding for administrative support for our team. Our funding model provides a fixed amount of overhead to support our team. While we are successfully operating, more funding would allow us to hire more Medical Office Assistants, reducing a bottleneck for new admissions and administrative work.

Stats

- Almost 600 new patients attached to a primary care provider
- 12284 patient visits provided

Success Stories

Camas Lelum attached nearly 600 new patients to a primary care provider in the past year. Many of them had no or little access to care prior to coming to us, and a number of them received life saving care as a result of being given a provider at Camas Lelum. We get new requests for a provider every day even as we bring more and more patients on to care. Despite this immense need, our team worked hard to reduce our waitlist from over 300 patients to just over 100.



Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Camas Lelum would like to acknowledge our partnership with the Songhees, Kosapsum, Sci'Anew and Pacheedaht Nations. We would like to acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Health, Island Health, the Victoria Primary Care Network, the First Nations Health Authority and Shoppers Drug Mart.

While it has been a year of tremendous growth, we have a lot of work to do meet the needs of community. Our goal is to attach another 1500 patients to a primary care provider in the coming years, and to look for opportunities to grow our team to increase the range and quantity of services we can offer.

Garden Team

Respectfully Submitted by Julie Parrell, Garden Team Lead



Staff

Julie Parrell – Garden Lead

Stephaine Sketchley – Senior Garden Support

Amy Haave- Garden Support

Raelynn Proudlove - Gardener

The Garden team was created to provide traditional medicines to community, help with food security issues and run programming to help connect the VNFC community to the land. Through our Peer Gardening Program, we empower Indigenous people to learn and share Traditional Knowledge while earning an hourly honorarium. We are funded to do this work through the lens of homelessness prevention. We also provide a natural space for community and staff to learn, unwind and connect to their cultural teachings.



Program Highlights

In 2024-2025, the Garden team really came into itself. We figured out how many staff and hours we need to get everything done well and on time. We hosted 42 workshops in 52 weeks both at VNFC and out in the Community. This feels like a small feat. This Spring we fenced off another 1000 square feet and are looking forward to designing a space for Elders and Youth to work together while nourishing the land, connections and each other.

Our two most attended workshops were a Salty and Sweet workshop and our Sweetgrass braiding workshops. At the Salty and Sweet workshop, we hosted over 45 people who came and made gifts for their loved ones at Christmas. We made flavored salts with the herbs we grew, harvested and dried, bath salts infused with medicinal oils that we made, and a sugar scrub packed with lavender flowers we grew. Watching community come together and work with the medicines we grow and make brings a deep sense of accomplishment to our team. Especially in the darkness of Winter.

Every year we look forward to the long calm days of August – the time of year that the Sweetgrass is ready to harvest and braid. For this I bring in the Peer Gardeners, we have a community smudge, then we collectively share all our teachings then we get to braiding. Once our fingers start to braid a calm chattiness seems to come over the group. Some tell stories of sadness while others offer us a laugh. This medicine has a gentle way of healing our hearts. It is our goal to have at least 50 to 65 braids to give out to community over the year.

Stats

During the 2024/2025 fiscal year we had 6145 points of contact. This number includes the tea blends that we make for soup lunch, our workshop participants and the number of times community reached out for medicines, and we provided them. As mentioned above we hosted 42 workshops during this time and taught many people how to make medicines and preserve foods.

Success Stories

A past Peer Gardener reached out this Spring with a success story. She had been attending a community dinner for women when the staff asked if anyone could help in the garden in exchange for a gift card. She was the only one to raise her hand. She said our program gave her the confidence and training needed to do a great job. The staff were thrilled with the quality of help she offered.

Earlier this Summer we were highlighted by our primary funder for all the great work we do in our grassroots, community connection building and homelessness prevention programming. Studies show that connecting Indigenous people to their culture saves lives and improves quality of life. It felt rewarding to be recognized and celebrated.

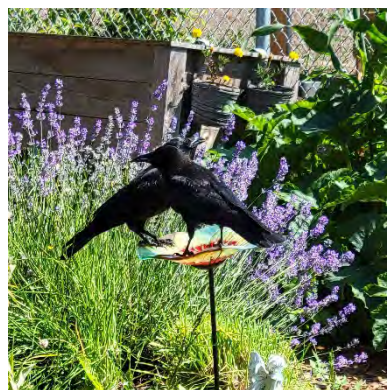
Our main Partnership is with both Farm Folk City Folk (FFCF) and North Star Organic Farms (NSOF). Weekly from May to October FFCF drops off organic local produce from both farms which we then share with community, the hamper programs and the kitchen. In the peak of summer, we can easily give away 75 bags of groceries and still give the kitchen a few cases of veggies every week. This Partnership helps prevent all this beautiful food from getting composted, gets organic produce into the fridges of Indigenous families and saves other programs at VNFC money.

The Garden at VNFC is a beautiful outdoor environment for community to heal, staff to refresh and a safe place for Traditional Knowledge to be shared. It is a deep honour for us to grow medicines for our community as they can be expensive and hard to source other wise. It is a space we are proud of and one we hope to keep growing year after year. We look forward to serving our community in 2025 and 2026.

Partnerships and Acknowledgements

The Garden Team would like to acknowledge the following for their support:

- Indigenous Reaching Homes
- FNHA
- Investment Agricultural Fund



Health Support and Wellness Services



Respectfully Submitted by Christina Kante, Wellness Team Manager

Staff

Isobel Dick – Health Support Worker

Scott Ireson – Administrative Support

Our Health Support team provides one-to-one and group supports, 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, information sharing, and accompaniment. In the Wellness Room community members access free massage, acupuncture, herbal medicine, cultural support, foot care, and more.

Program Highlights

This year our team hosted an 8-week Honour Your Health Challenge (April-May 2024) with funding from ISPARC, which included health information and activities including Lahal, yoga, and Tibetan Sound healing. We had a total of 13 participants during the series.

We offered Information Sessions with Island Health: Virtual Care Program, Indigenous Disability Canada and BCANDS, and the Law Center and Seniors First regarding Wills and Estates.

We hosted a Mindfulness series with Shima Hashemian from July-Sept while she completed her practicum. Staff and community found it beneficial, and we hosted additional monthly sessions between October and March.

We completed renovations to our Wellness Room, including painting, new cabinets, curtains between treatment rooms for increased privacy, updated lighting, and artwork. This has been a welcome refresh to the space.

Challenges

April-August 2024, Pacific Rim College could not have an acupuncture clinic at VNFC due to requirements for an assessment of the site by the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners & Acupuncturists of British Columbia. The assessment has been completed, and the clinic was able to return for the fall semester, starting in September.

Events

We hosted the 2nd Annual Community Care Fair on March 12, 2025. We had approximately 300 people attend, including community members, staff, partners, and 90 service providers.

Services included:

- o Haircuts with Victory Barber – 23
- o Rock Painting with Shona Collison – 11
- o Ear Seeds with Coco Acupuncture – 45
- o Chair Massage with West Coast College of Massage Therapy – 42
- o Acupuncture with PRC – 12
- o Dental cleanings with Wheely-Clean – 5
- o Hep-C Tests with Cool-Aid – 5
- o Blood pressure checks with Gorge UPCC
- o Animal Therapy with Healing Hounds

- o Cervical self-screen with VNFC Camus Lelum Clinic
- o Cultural Supports and Cultural Activities (various VNFC elders and VNFC Garden).

Stats

- Clients for Health Support – 19
- Points of service – 2,819
- Wellness Room and Programming
 - o PRC Herbal medicine – 143 appointments
 - o PRC Acupuncture – 21 appointments
 - o Community-style acupuncture with Emma – 100 appointments
 - o WCCMT Community Massage – 126 appointments
 - o WCCMT Staff Massage – 403 appointments
 - o Footcare – 96 appointments
 - o Community Access at PRC and WCCMT – 48 appointments
 - o Mindfulness – 12 sessions with 40 participants
 - o Hearing Testing with Ears to You – 5 appointments
 - o Information Sessions – 36 people in 3 sessions

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

The Wellness Team would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their support and collaboration:

- Island Health
- Pacific Rim College – students and supervisors
- West Coast College of Massage Therapy – students and supervisors
- Vancouver Island Footcare Nurses
- Shima Hashemian – Mindfulness facilitator
- Emma Barker – Barefoot Healing Acupuncture



Indigenous Culture and Language



Respectfully Submitted by Lisa Mercure, Manager ICL

Staff

Manager ICL – Lisa Mercure

Language Hub Coordinator – Ellie Dion

Language Support – Ash Murphy

Elder Support – Cindy Allen

Language Support – Dale Whiteford

Elders and Seniors – Too many to name!!

The Indigenous Culture and Language (ICL) team provides a range of programming and education to community, with a focus on supporting Elders and Seniors, and teaching Indigenous language. The Indigenous Language Hub provides regularly scheduled classes led by Fluent Speakers teaching 7 Indigenous languages to community, representing local Nations and Nations from across Canada. The ICL team provides regular programming for Elders and Seniors including bingo, Tech Time, and monthly outings. Elders and Seniors are employed as part of the ICL team and participate in programs throughout the VNFC like CEER, Warriors, and Wellness. They also provide cultural services regularly including ceremony and healing practices to community members at the VNFC.

Program Highlights

The past year was incredibly busy for ICL as the team grew to 5 regular staff members and offered countless programs throughout the year.

The Language program experienced a funding gap early in the year resulting in pause in classes, but with a Federal grant late in 2024, the ICL was able to increase staffing and resume classes in Cree, Anishinaabe, Nuu-Chah-Nulth, Dene, and Dakota. Classes are offered weekly either in person at the VNFC or virtually. Classes focus on teaching through participation in cultural activities where community learn language as they practice their culture. For example, working with respected Knowledge Keeper, Art Napoleon to learn Cree while processing bison meat for community to share.

The Language Hub also hosted a number of important community gatherings to raise awareness of language programming, celebrate with community, and plan language classes for the coming year. A Nuu-Chah-Nulth gathering brought together 75 community members for dancing, drumming and sharing of food. The Bear song was performed, a special moment for community. The Dene community also met, bringing together Dene living locally and Dene in their traditional territories through a virtual gathering. 40 Dene community members shared prayers, food, song and discussions of traditional ways and Dene law.

Elders and Seniors also participated in a number of programs this year. Highlights include a gathering to honour them for National Truth and Reconciliation day hosted at the Gorge Park Pavillion, participation in the Island wide gathering of Elders, Winter Festivus.

The ICL team including Elders and Seniors also hosted Tipi Teachings for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community at celebrations for National Indigenous Peoples Day at Royal Road University and National Truth and Reconciliation Day at the Songhees Pow Wow. Our team provided teachings to thousands of community members over the two days of events.



Challenges

Funding continues to be an ongoing challenge for ICL. This program has no core funding and relies on a number of grants to operate – creating ongoing uncertainty for staffing and programming. We saw this play out this year as we had a reduction in funding for part of the year resulting in a decrease in programming, followed by a temporary surge in funding allowing the expansion of services. The team spends a large amount of time seeking funding, writing grant proposals, and reporting. There has also been an increase in “distinctions” based funding so that programming based on teachings from Nations outside of BC are increasingly at risk.

Supporting Elders and Seniors while an honour is also a challenge as they continue to work through the trauma of colonization, residential schools, Indian hospitals and other forms of racism and discrimination. Additionally, each year we lose treasured Elders and Seniors to the spirit world, along with their teachings and wisdom, increasing the urgency to pass along their teachings to the next generations.

Stats

It is difficult to capture the scope and impact of the ICL team through statistics but some numbers to highlight our work:

- 7 languages taught
- Over 30 Elders and Seniors employed
- 338 participants in programming
- 2092 points of contact
- Over 4000 Tipi Teachings attendees



Participant Quotes

“Our language is our Identity” – Elder

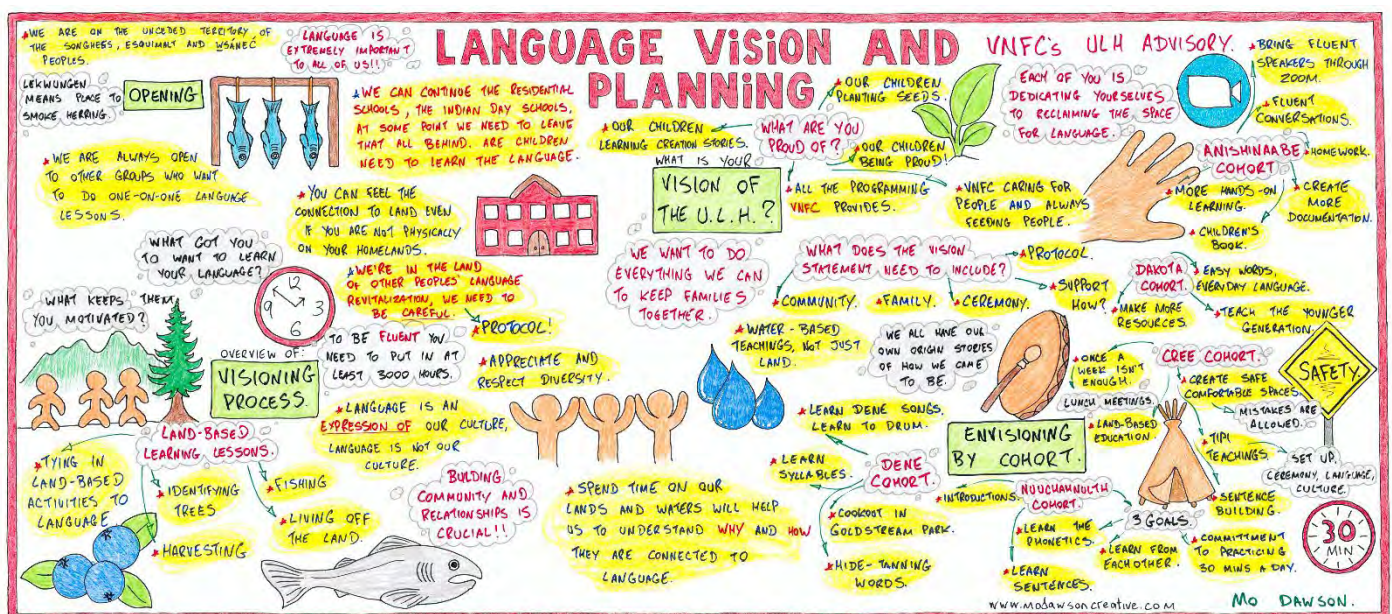
“I really enjoyed the Dene Gathering ... I would love to see what comes up in our next meeting.

Thanks for inviting me.” – Dene participant from Yellowknife

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

The ICL team would like to acknowledge the support of:

- The Government of Canada (Heritage Canada, New Horizons for Seniors)
- The BC Association of Friendship Centres
- National Association of Friendship Centres
- First Peoples Cultural Council
- The Victoria Foundation
- The Diocese of Victoria
- New Relationship Trust
- United Church of Canada



Indigenous Wellness Providers -Primary Care Network



Respectfully Submitted by Chris Van Brabant, PCN Indigenous Lead

Staff

Indigenous Lead – Chris Van Brabant

Indigenous Wellness Providers – Jack Omeasoo, Rebecca Rubin, Mackenzie Taylor, Candice Montgomery, Alexandra Olivier

Implemented in 2023 as part of the Victoria Primary Care Network, the PCN Indigenous Wellness Providers (IWP) program is a partnership between the VNFC and the Victoria PCN to provide Indigenous focused health supports to Indigenous community living in the region. Under the supervision of the PCN Indigenous Lead, 6 full-time IWP walk with community in their health journey, helping them to access Indigenous and non-Indigenous health supports and services. The service is open to any Indigenous person in the region experiencing barriers to access care with community able to self refer or be referred from any provider within the PCN. IWP provide transportation and accompaniment to medical appointments, help access health supports, provide health education, link community to Indigenous providers and supports, and generally navigate the health care system and mitigate the effects systemic racism faced by many community. The IWP also coordinate and run health related programming like the annual Care Fair, arthritis self-management, and the ISPARC Healthy Living Challenge.

Program Highlights

The PCN IWP program entered its second year of operations in 2024/25, growing from 3 to 6 FTE. With the expansion of the Camas Lelum Primary Care Centre, and integration into the PCN, referrals expanded significantly. The IWP almost doubled the number of community members served and increased points of contact from 3389 to 7128. The IWP continued to be integrated into VNFC services, working closely with a number of departments to support programming and access to Indigenous focused care for community members. The IWP also continued integration into the PCN so that Indigenous community accessing care throughout the region, have access to supports to navigate the health care system.

Challenges

Meeting the diverse needs of community continues to be a challenge for our IWP. Community often comes to the team with a range of complex issues. The mandate of the program given by our funders is to focus on supports around health care, but the reality is that so many issues are interconnected – like housing, food, income and family. Our IWP do their best to work with community to access resources around non-health related issues like housing, income supports, family supports and food security while trying to maintain the focus of the service on health-related supports.

Another challenge, even in an urban setting, is transportation to and from health care appointments. While the IWP do provide accompaniment to some appointment, they cannot take everyone, everywhere all the time. Alternate transport is often too expensive, or the

community has barriers to accessing things like bus and taxi. The IWP are constantly having to work creatively to help community members find transport solutions.

A third challenge has been creating access to the service for Indigenous community who do not know about the program or get their health care in settings that may not be taking advantage of the IWP. The IWP program is a resource for any Indigenous community member, and a lot of work has been done to make sure that primary care providers throughout the region are aware of the service, but there are still barriers for community accessing care through primary care providers who are not familiar with Indigenous specific resources or who lack the cultural safety to work with Indigenous community. Many primary care providers do not know which of their patients are Indigenous, do not know how to ask, and/or are hesitant to discuss what Indigenous-specific resources their patients may need.

Events

The IWP organized and supported a number of events at the VNFC over the past year. They were part of the planning committee for the Care Fair, our very successful health fair offering dozens of health services and education to committee. Hundreds of community members attended and over 30 partner organisations participated.

The IWP also offered an ISPARC Healthy Living Challenge, a series of health focused events where community learned health living habits. The IWP also supported the ceremonial opening of the Tsow Tun Lelum Substance Use and Trauma Treatment Centre, attended the CRD Health Communities Primary Care forum, supported the FNHA Wellness Tables, and supported the Indigenous Safety in Healthcare training, and participated in the Indigenous Wellness Engagement Working Group for UVIC in the development of the health-related faculty

Stats

- The IWP supported 137 clients in 2024/25
- 2102 visits with community members
- Provided 7128 points of contact to community

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

The PCN IWP program would like to acknowledge the support of Ministry of Health, Island Health and the Victoria Primary Care Network.

Mental Health and Substance Use



Respectfully Submitted by Christina Kante, Wellness Team Manager

Staff

Jesse Lucier – Mental Health and Substance Use Support Worker

Laura Bates – Registered Clinical Counsellor

Christina Kante – Mental Health and Substance Use Support Worker and Mental Health Liaison

VNFC MHSU services provide individual, and group supports for community seeking to improve their health and make changes to their mental health and substance use. MHSU service include one-to-one supports and referrals to community supports and services, including treatment and other wellness programs. The program also offers brief service and consultation. Importantly, our MHSU services also include cultural pathways to healing and this year offered activities including Beading Circles and Cultural Support which provides people struggling with substance use a pathway to connect with traditional healing and the Community.

Program Highlights

This year we continued to partner with Indigenous Culture and Language program to offer Beading circles throughout the year and hosted a Cedar Headband making workshop. We offered regular Cultural Support throughout the year from a variety of practitioners and approaches, including cedar brushing, smudging, and other healing processes.

We started preparations to welcome the Victoria Sexual Assault Center Indigenous Counsellor on site for support for community who have experience sexual violence.

Staff in this program participated in:

- Recovery Capital Conference in Calgary (April 3-4, 2024)
- FNHA Regional Wellness Tables and Treatment Pathways webinar
- National Indigenous People's Day
- Mental Health Navigator Network
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Collaborative Response Network
- Peers Out of Harms Way Speaker series
- VNFC Community Learning Program
- Project Reconnect

Stats

Points of Service – 5,667

Total clients – 116

Cultural support – 112 appointments in 9 sessions

Beading Circles – 23 groups with 374 participants

Cedar Headbands – 12 participants

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

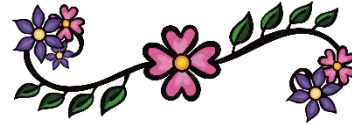
The VNFC MHSU program would like to thank the following organizations for their support and collaboration:

- First Nations Health Authority
- Island Health
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness
- CheckingIn
- Victoria Sexual Assault Centre
- Surrounded by Cedar



Territory for the Arts

Respectfully submitted by Shona Collison, RCAT, Art Therapist, Manager of Therapeutic Arts



The Territory for the Arts 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 from a variety of Art Therapy schools for either sign-up programming or Community drop-in.

Directives for the year designed by the practicum students for Thursday mornings are as follows:

May – Exploring Gratitude through Art

June – Honoring your Journey through Art

August– Creating Plant Friends

September – Wellness room Art (Participants created art for the Wellness room walls)

October – Exploring Rest through Art

November – Exploring Nature through Art

December – Shining the Light Lantern making

January – Boundaries and Art

February – Art and Self-love

March – Exploring Peace through Art

April – Exploring Fairy Tales and Folklore

All Thursday Art programming is sign up, as space is limited. It is very well attended, often with a waitlist for interested Community.

One participant stated, "This is real medicine for me, I love the art and the connection to others."

Friday morning Art Therapy Practicum students hold the space in the Territory for the Arts for Community drop in Art. Participants often show up with bead work or other art works they are working on. The atmosphere is light and there is generally lots of laughter. A light, fun directive is always available also such as: Self awards, clothes peg figures, coloring outside the lines, and 'softening the edges' to name a few, postcards of self appreciation (mailed weeks later by me), to name a few.



Art as Medicine/Closed Studio

Art as Medicine is a closed Art Therapy processing group for women 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, over the last 17 years, participation has always been steady, and participants have expressed how helpful this process is to affecting positive change in their lives. This process offers participants an experience of being their own best expert as well as an opportunity to build relationship with practicing discernment, connecting with their own inner wisdom along with experiences of being in a place of choice.

The closed, confidential space offers a variety of 2-dimensional art materials. Participants are expected to show up at 9:30, choose their art materials and create. There is no talking during this time. At 11:00 the art is put up and participants are welcome to speak about the art and their process. The art is kept onsite and every 3-4 months depending on the ebb and flow of the group each person has an opportunity to put all their artwork up chronologically and further process it.

In January, a Community member who had been attending since 2011 off and on, experienced putting up their artwork from 2011 – 2024. It took up the entirety of the room and they commented on how powerful this experience was for them. Again, this gentle, non-invasive process allowed her to make connections, find answers and be her own best ally and expert in her life experiences. The art held it all for her, and taking the time and space away from her pieces allowed her to see the information they held from a different perspective.

Combined the Territory saw 78 Community members come through programming, with 869 points of service.

Going into August the Territory will have 3 practicum students from: the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute, the Canadian International Institute of Art Therapy and St. Stephens College, offering a variety of programming and directives.

The Territory will continue to offer a kind, safe place for Community to gather and create.



Gathering of Leaders

May 16th, 2024



Photo by Greg Forsberg



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