2026 Annual Report

Fiscal Year April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026



Photo by Greg Forsberg

Victoria Native Friendship Centre

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Table of Contents

About VNFC 1

Board of Directors Report April 2025-March 2026 5

Executive Director's 2025-2026 Annual Report 6

Administration Department 9

- Indigenous Reaching Home 10
- Knit With Purpose 13

Community Action & Learning Department 15

- Bruce Parisian Library 16
- Community Action & Learning 18
- Community Services 22
- Leadership & Advocacy 26

Early Childhood Supports Department 28

- Aboriginal Infant Development 29
- Aboriginal Supported Child Development 30
- Indigenous Speech Language Pathology 31
- Neurodiversity 32
- Xa Xe SŦELIT̲K̲EŁ̲ Daycare 33

Family Development & Food Security Department 34

- Awakening the Warrior Within 35
- Career, Employment & Education Resources 36
- Family Services & Intake 40
- Indigenous Youth & Family Liaison SD61 42
- Jordan's Principle 43
- Kitchen 45
- Parent Supports 46
- Women's Wellness 48
- Young Warriors 49
- Youth and Community Leadership 51

Table of Contents cont'd

Properties, Homes & Living Supports Department **53**

Properties, Homes & Living Supports 54

VNFC Shelter 57

Wellness & Health Department **60**

Camas Lelum Primary Care Clinic 61

Food & Medicine Garden 64

Health Support & Wellness Services 66

Indigenous Culture & Language 68

Indigenous Wellness Providers – Primary Care Network 71

Mental Health and Substance Use 73

Territory for the Arts 75




ADMINISTRATION
FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY
WELLNESS AND HEALTH
VNFC
EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS
PROPERTIES, HOMES AND LIVING SUPPORTS
COMMUNITY ACTION AND LEARNING

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, 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 2025 Allies Campaign, a meaningful way for the businesses and individuals to contribute towards reconciliation.
The following are some additional VNFC funders, community partner agencies and organizations.

- Songhees First Nation
- Xʷsepsəm First 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
- SC'IĄNEW First Nationn
- 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 Society
- School District 61 INED
- School District 62 Indigenous Education
- Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services

Community Partners cont'd

- Allies Campaign contributors
- 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
- Sysco
- 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
- Greater Victoria Public Library
- Hutchinson Contracting
- Indigenous Reconciliation Fund-Catholic Diocese
- Islander Engineering
- Island Health Authority
- Kiwanis Club
- Lesley Wicks
- M1 Agency
- McConnell Foundation
- Mischa Weisz Foundation
- NICHI
- North Star Organics
- Pacific Blue Cross Foundation
- Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions
- Parent Support Services
- Provincial Employees Community Service Fund
- Real Estate Foundation
- Rina M. Bidin Foundation
- Rotary Club
- Saanich Municipality
- Seaspan
- Second Harvest
- Shoppers Foundation Women's Health
- Sovreign Order of St. John of Jerusalem Knights Hospitaler
- Steve Nash Foundation
- TD Challenge
- United Church of Canada
- United Way British Columbia
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Foundation
- Van City Community Foundation
- Victoria Foundation
- Victoria Primary Care Network
- Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre
- Victoria Symphony

In 2025-2026, the VNFC

- Provided over **533,790** points of service, supporting **15,500+** members of community
- **Served 181,660** meals and snacks from the VNFC kitchen, and hosted **2000** Soup Lunch guests
- **Sheltered 797** unhoused community and created **5,374** Hampers
- **Contained 7,000 plus** Indigenous-specific resources in the Bruce Parisian Library
- **Offered 79 units** of safe and affordable housing for Indigenous Community and **65 families** on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish People
- **Contributed over $12 million** in wages, salaries, and professional fees to the community
- **Cared for 59** Indigenous children in our daycare
- **Employed 218** staff members, with **425** volunteers contributing **9,206** volunteer hours

Board of Directors Report 2025-26



It has been an honour to serve as Board President since the end of Februrary 2026. While I joined in the final months of this reporting year, I have been inspired by the dedication of our Board, staff, volunteers, and community members who continue to strengthen the VNFC. This past year has been one of continued growth and service.

This past year has been one of continued growth and service. Together, we have supported important work across housing, health, culture, youth, Elders, employment, and community wellness while continuing to advocate for the needs and priorities of Indigenous people in our commmunity.

As a Board, we have also begun strengthening our governance practices to support the long-term sustainability of the Centre. This work includes improving Board policies, enhancing financial oversight, and building governance systemts that will help ensure that the Centre continues to thrive for many years to come.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors, Executive Director, staff, volunteers, partners, funders, and the many community members whose commitment makes this work possible. I look forward to continuing this work together in the coming year.

In Friendship,

Nathalie Pumbrun
Board President

Executive Director's Report 2025-26



On behalf of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre Board, management, staff, and volunteers, I would like to acknowledge the territory of the Lləkʷəŋən people, who for the last 56 years have welcomed us graciously. We are honoured to live, work and serve on these lands and remain committed to strengthening our relationship with the Nations whose stewardship continues to guide us. The 2025-2026 fiscal year has been one of significant transition, growth, and resilience.

As an organization, we have navigated change while remaining steadfast in our commitment to providing culturally grounded programs and services that support the wellness of urban Indigenous people.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our Assistant Executive Director, Kari Hutchison, who has dedicated an extraordinary 31 years of service to the VNFC. Kari has been an invaluable partner, a thoughtful strategist, and a steadfast leader whose commitment has helped shape the organization we are today. I would also like to thank the Department Directors; Rebecca Mabee (Director of Family Development and Food Security), Tanya Clarmont (Director of Community Action and Learning), Grey Showler (Director of Wellness and Health), Kari-Ann Leadbitter (Director of Early Childhood Supports), Stacy Bauer (Director of Properties, Homes, and Living Supports), and Amy Thompson (Finance Director), who continue to lead with compassion, professionalism, and an unwavering commitment to serve our community. Their leadership ensures that our programs remain responsive, culturally safe, and grounded in the needs of those we serve.

2025 marked the retirement of our fund developer officer, Lynne Milnes, after dedicating 7 years of service to VNFC. We thank Lynne for her many contributions and wish her every happiness in her retirement. The donation contributions to the VNFC this year were $690,451.00. As we looked towards the future, we welcomed two individuals, Ron Lees and Kari McLay, who joined VNFC to strengthen our community engagement and fund development efforts. Their work comes at an important time as organizations across the province continue to face increasing financial pressures. Like many organizations, VNFC experienced significant funding reductions during the year, including the loss of Complex Care Housing funding. As a result, we had to make the difficult decision to pause this project while we continue to pursue new funding opportunities and partnerships that will allow us to move this important initiative forward in the future.

Executive Director's Report 2025-26 cont'd

In April, we were honoured to welcome representatives from the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) to Victoria. I also had the privilege of attending the NAFC and Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) Urban Indigenous Health Forum in Montréal, followed by the NAFC's 54th Annual General Meeting and the 3rd Annual Urban Indigenous Summit in Ottawa. These national gatherings strengthened relationships with Friendship Centres across Canada and created opportunities to advance conversations around urban Indigenous health, housing, governance, and community well-being.

Closer to home, I participated in the Urban Indigenous Non-Profit Leaders Gatherings in Kamloops and Nanaimo, where leaders came together to share knowledge, identify common priorities, and strengthen pathways for collaboration with the Province of British Columbia. These conversations continue to reinforce the importance of Indigenous-led solutions for Indigenous communities.

One of the highlights of the year was our partnership with the Victoria Symphony through the newly launched *In Harmony* initiative. Following a five-year hiatus, SPLASH welcomed tens of thousands of visitors over the August long weekend. Together with local Nations, we helped create a celebration that honoured Indigenous culture through welcoming remarks from the local Chiefs and Councils, powerful songs and dances of the Lək̓ʷəŋən people, and traditional canoe protocol led by the Salish Sea Wolf paddlers. It was a meaningful example of reconciliation in action and the strength that comes through collaboration.

Creating opportunities for future Indigenous leaders is another responsibility I value deeply. This year, we welcomed Indigenous business students from Monash University in Australia, sharing VNFC's story and discussing the qualities of effective Indigenous leadership. I also had the pleasure of speaking with students in Camosun College's Indigenous Wellness Leadership program, helping bridge the gap between academic learning and community practice while encouraging the next generation of leaders.

January brought new opportunities for increased expansion of programming space when VNFC assumed operations of Norway House located on Hillside Avenue. Norway House has long played an important role in supporting community in Victoria. Under the leadership of the VNFC, the facility continues to operate as a community hall, known to us now as Friendship Hall, with a focus on respect and community wellbeing while honouring the history of Norway House. We were honoured to host the Sons of Norway's 80th Anniversary celebration of the Lodge.

Executive Director's Report 2025-26 cont'd

This year has reminded us that change often brings both challenges and opportunities. While financial pressures, organizational transitions, and evolving community needs have required resilience, they have also opened doors to innovation, stronger partnership, and renewed purpose.

Relationship building with the Nations remains a priority. I met with leadership from Xʷsepsəm Nation and Songhees Nation to continue building respectful partnerships grounded in mutual support and a shared path forward that deepens our relationship in the years ahead. This year has also reminded us that change often brings both challenges and opportunities. While financial pressures, organizational transitions, and evolving community needs have required resilience, they have also opened doors to innovation, stronger partnership, and renewed purpose.

Through it all, our staff, Board, Elders, volunteers, partners, funders, and community members have demonstrated remarkable dedication to the work we do together.

On behalf of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, thank you for your continued trust, collaboration, and commitment. Together, we will continue building stronger, healthier, and vibrant futures for urban Indigenous peoples for generations to come.

Huy tsep q'u – Thanking you all

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

Administration Department Programs

Indigenous Reaching Home
Knit With Purpose

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

This year, IRH made the significant decision to withdraw from the BC Alignment Project. While we have long supported efforts to strengthen Coordinated Access, we remain guided by the principle of *"Nothing about us without us."* As the new Coordinated Access system moved toward implementation, it became clear that meaningful Indigenous engagement and co-development had not been achieved. In the best interests of the Indigenous communities we serve, we could not endorse the rollout of a system that, in our view, did not adequately reflect the principles of cultural safety, equity, and Indigenous self-determination. We remain committed to advocating for Indigenous-led approaches that meaningfully include Indigenous

voices in the design, implementation, and governance of systems that directly impact our communities.

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*
- 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
    - 178 individuals successfully placed into more stable housing
    - 88.5% retention rate
- Short-Term Rental Assistance
    - 112 individuals benefitted
- Core Prevention Services
    - 112 individuals supported
    - 98% 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 past year has been one of reflection, growth, and principled leadership. As the Reaching Home program continues to evolve, IRH has remained steadfast in advocating for systems that are developed with Indigenous peoples, not for Indigenous peoples. Guided by the principle of *"Nothing about us without us,"* we continue to champion Indigenous self-determination, meaningful engagement, and culturally safe practices across all aspects of the homelessness response system.

While this year included difficult decisions and significant change, it also created opportunities to strengthen partnerships, reaffirm our values, and continue advocating for

approaches that place Indigenous voices at the centre of decision-making. We remain committed to fostering collaboration, supporting community-driven solutions, and ensuring accountability to the people and Nations we serve.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), our Indigenous Community Advisory Board (ICAB), community partners, and the many organizations and individuals who continue to walk alongside us. Your trust, guidance, and commitment make this work possible. Together, we will continue striving toward a future where Indigenous peoples have equitable access to safe housing, culturally appropriate supports, and systems that honour their rights, knowledge, and leadership.



Knit With Purpose

Respectfully Submitted by Kari McLay, Fund Development and Community Engagement

Staff
Kari McLay – Community Engagement & Fund Development
Noelle Fraser – Development Assistant

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 has continued to support 21 knitters and staff while providing customers with a beautiful, wearable legacy of craftmanship and tradition. This fiscal, Knit sold 485 items and due to popular demand, we have recently incorporated toques, slippers and scarves into the Knit range.



Knit's inventory has changed to primarily pop-up and location-based or direct sales, and there is a focus on moving existing inventory. The website is still active, but less of a focus than in the previous year. Knit continues to make advances in high-end clothing retail and marketing. We are continuing our sales affiliation with Old Stone Trade in New York (a curated online marketplace offering handmade luxury womenswear and accessories. Knit has also established a business partnership with the Makers retail franchise in downtown Victoria, as well as the Aunty Collective, and research on a potential partnership with a global brand. Some Knit pop-up events and presentations in the 2025-26 fiscal included:

- 2025 VNFC Winter Artisan's Market
- 2025 3-day pop up at Ecologyst
- 2026 BCAAFC conference Laurel Point Inn
- 2025 Christmas Market Oaklands Community Centre
- 2025 Workshop and showing of the documentary Film Our Knitted Legacy at the Sylvan United Church
- 2026 Presentation at Beehive Wool Shop
- 2026 Panel Presentation at the Rising Economy Conference

- 2026 Presentation to Mertz Pharmaceutical

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









Community Action & Learning Programs

Bruce Parisian Library

Community Action & Learning

Community Services

Leadership & Advocacy

Bruce Parisian Library

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.

BPL continues to lead reconciliation work within libraries on south Vancouver Island, including fruitful partnerships with Greater Victoria Public Libraries (GVPL) and the University of Victoria's Libraries. We focus on partnerships with programs and organizations so we can share valuable resources. The BPL continues to run on volunteerism and donations. With deep gratitude we acknowledge our dedicated volunteers and donors, who make it possible for us to keep our doors open and who contribute to a warm welcoming environment for our guests.

This fiscal year the library had 427 items borrowed by 118 patrons. We had 75 community members sign up as new patrons and our catalogue has reached over 6,600 items in 19 distinctive collections. Almost 90% of these items are Indigenous topics which have been written by or in collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

Library Programs

An exciting new Book Return Program with GVPL will launch in April 2026, enabling BPL books to be returned at any GVPL site in south Vancouver Island. We expect the number of unreturned and missing BPL items to reduce, while increasing patron activity as returns are no longer limited to VNFC business hours, two consistent challenges our library in the past. Preparation for the Book Return Program included ensuring all BPL books were clearly stamped and catalogued, creating a clear internal return process, training GVPL staff, and testing the system.

BPL continues to run our two core programs: Daycare Storytime and Jeannie's Teatime. 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 listening skills and literacy as well. The library is also fortunate that long-time volunteer Jeannie comes each week to offer a welcoming space of warm tea and one of the greatest medicines, homemade treats. This is a highly anticipated session that encourages exploration of the collection and sees both community and staff come through.

We are deeply saddened to see the end of our partnership with the Inter-cultural Association (ICA), as they have lost funding for their Game Changer program. In this final 2025-2026 fiscal we hosted 4 cohorts totalling 100 participants, to learn about the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the impacts of colonization and moving forward with reconciliation.

Community Engagement

The library is still steadily growing its online presence though the social media sites Facebook and Instagram to be able to actively market to and engage with the community. Staff and volunteers also attend VNFC events such as the Care Fairs, Back-to-School Picnic and National Indigenous Peoples Day to increase our known presence within the Greater Victoria area and extend our reach to those beginning or continuing their reconciliation journey.

The library also participates in the CAL Department's new social media in support of the social enterprise. BPL is an important partner of the social enterprise, offering our learners an ongoing opportunity to engage with VNFC and new learning materials.

The library was fortunate to send 2 staff members to the BC Library Association (BCLA) Conference, May 2025. It was a great opportunity to gain ideas and make connections with other library organizations. There was an array of presentations, 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.



Community Action & Learning



Respectfully submitted by Chris Mockford, Leadership & Advocacy Coordinator

Staff
Tanya Clarmont, Director of Community Action & Learning
Kalynka Cherkosh, Special Projects Manager
Nadya Comeau, Administrative Assistant
Amea Douglass, Programs Coordinator
Jam Ramjattan, Learning Curriculum Manager
Cassidy Villebrun-Buracas, Law and Advocacy Coordinator
Sue White, Programs Coordinator
Student interns: Lily Charette, Kelsey Acheson, Tessa Cristiano, Anastazia Lewis Mitchell

Learning Curriculums Team

This team focuses on programming that supports reconciliation and reciprocity, by creating inclusive, restorative learning environments grounded in cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, and community trust.

Social Enterprise

The CAL Department spent the year developing and launching a new Social Enterprise for our most important learning programs; Community Learning Program (CLP) and Indigenous Safety in Healthcare (ISH). A social enterprise model can achieve long stable access to these programs and create resiliency to the changing focuses of public policy and economy. It also requires a shift in perspective about how we offer programs and educational opportunities, including activating our social media platforms and empowering program alumni to be our champions.

To support the social enterprise a new online learning platform was created through Thinkific, which manages registration, payments, online learning content, and allows learners to join an online community. New CLP and ISH promotional videos are available on VNFC's Youtube channel, and our VNFC CAL webpage was updated with new information about our programs and access to registration and fee information. We are working to expand offerings over the next year.

Learning Programs

The past year was a transition time for our learning programs. Funding previously available disappeared with a shift in government priorities. Programs that advance reconciliation, such as our Community Learning Program (CLP) and Indigenous Safety in Healthcare (ISH), were the first to feel the strain. Thankfully, we were already in the process of shifting towards a social enterprise model and so put stronger efforts behind that process.

A first shift was to offer Learners the opportunity to make a donation to offset the cost of their seat in a program. From September 2025 to March 2026 approximately $40,000 was raised, with an average donation of close to $1000, demonstrating the high value participants place on

our programs. One learner stated: “CLP offered me a foundation from which to participate in ongoing learning and engage in community in a way that I didn't before. I no longer feel as though I'm performing reconciliation but actually participating in it.” Another learner felt “This [ISH] curriculum is so meaningful and well designed, the in-person learning was so valuable.”

In the 2025-26 fiscal year, we hosted almost 300 learners through 19 cohorts of ISH and CLP programs. This reflects over 6,000 hours of structured learning, not to mention the ongoing learning journeys which begin for those impacted by the programs. One learner said the program was “a safe container for growing in (their) learning journey. (They) felt challenged and supported to continue this work.”



Community Learning Program (CLP)

CLP has completed 4 full years of delivery and brings Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants together in a safe, supportive environment guided by Indigenous teachings. Through dialogue, reflection, and hands-on experience, CLP builds understanding and confidence to engage in reconciliation in meaningful, lasting ways.

VNFC COMMUNITY LEARNING PROGRAM

CLP	ALL TIME	2025-2026
NUMBER OF COHORTS	34	10
GRADUATED	547	144
WAITLISTED	291	150+
AVERAGE COHORT SIZE	15.5	14.3

Quotes - “A holistic approach to learning about reconciliation in every area: mind, body, spirit”

“Having these kinds of conversations with people equally invested in truth and reconciliation is a dream come true”

“Facilitators offered an inclusive a deep dive into Indigenous learnings and meet everyone where they are at on their reconciliation journey.’



Indigenous Safety in Healthcare (ISH)

ISH has completed 3 full years of delivery and is an Indigenous-led, experiential learning opportunity designed to build confidence, fluency, and understanding in providing culturally safe care. Grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, this program equips healthcare workers and leaders with the knowledge and practical tools to foster safer, more inclusive healthcare environments.

ISH	ALL TIME	2025-2026
NUMBER OF COHORTS	29	9
GRADUATED	360	123
WAITLISTED	100+	50+
AVERAGE COHORT SIZE	12.6	11.1

Quotes - “This is pertinent and relevant learning for everyone in healthcare. Indigenous patients, clients and residents deserve to have a culturally safe health care experience, and this course will help you learn how to provide that. It is a safe, friendly and learner-centred course - highly recommend!”

“This course challenged me in new ways and provided a safe and supportive environment for self-reflection and learning. A great step in the journey to cultural safety and humility.”

Looking Forward

Moving into our first year as a social enterprise, we are learning new skills to thrive. We are empowered with documented lasting impacts of the program including an ability to create changemakers. We, as facilitators, educators and administrators, are learning how to market, promote, build partnerships and run our programs as a social enterprise, such as researching avenues to accreditation for professional associations such as medical professionals, teachers and those who work in legal system, and creating smaller learning opportunities for individuals and organizations, as a laddering system to our learning programs.



Learning Facilitators Hub (LFH)

An impact of the success of our learning programs was the need to develop and foster a team of facilitators who can guide learners through our programs. We launched LFH in 2023, to create space for current and future facilitators to gather, share knowledge, learn new skills, practice self- and community-care, and understand ongoing changes to our programs. We currently have 20 members in the LFH.

In February 2026, we hosted training over 4 full days to 17 participants. A few topics included:

- Being a Facilitator in CAL Programs; ethics and expectations
- Deepening Knowledge; structure and processes of CAL
- The Mentor-Mentee Relationship; a personalized approach to onboarding
- Talking about Colonization
- Drama Therapy; connecting your physical self to the space
- Cultural Appreciation vs Appropriation

In June 2025, we hosted an afternoon networking session inviting those attached to the LFH and those exploring joining, to come together in circle and become better acquainted, as well as discuss the benefits and barriers of choosing to do the hard work of cultural safety facilitation. Fourteen people attended, including 6 new people, 2 of whom joined the LFH and have started their onboarding work with Mentors

LEARNING FACILITATOR HUB	**2025-26**
WORKSHOPS	5
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	33
LFH FACILITATORS	20

Community Services

This team focuses on relationships and growing community connections through opportunities related to legal services, library services, volunteer services, and community events.

Law Clinic

The Law Clinic continues to provide free, safe, and culturally appropriate legal services to urban Indigenous community members through the Summary Advice Clinic and Wills and Estates Lunch and Learns. The Clinic also provides an Indigenous orientation and cultural emersion for second and third year law students.

Summary Advice Clinic (SAC)

SAC is co-hosted with our colleagues at the Law Centre and VNFC's Warriors programs, which are focused on emotional wellness, anti-violence and decolonization. Accessible weekly, community members are first welcomed to the space with food and refreshments to ensure they are meeting the legal providers in a good way. When they are ready, they are led to an

interview room where they can discuss their legal needs in a safe and confidential space. Over the 2025-26 fiscal year the clinic has provided over 570 points of services to 169 community members.

Specialty Summary Advice Clinic

In January of 2026, the Law Clinic began a new partnership with British Columbia First Nation Justice Council's (BCFNJC) Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) to co-host a monthly summary advice clinic. BCFNJC's mandate is to provide legal support in areas of criminal matters and child protection matters relating to Ministry of Child and Family Development. This partnership provides new access to much needed free legal support which is not provided by the Law Centre.

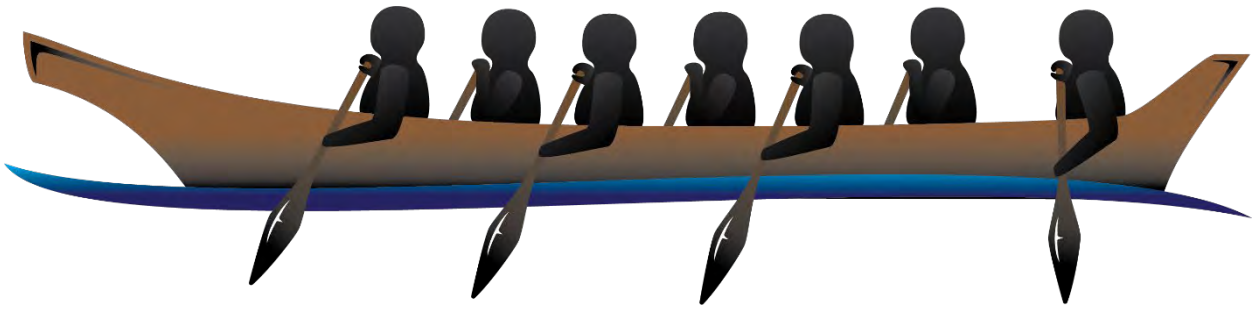
Wills & Estates Lunch and Learns

Wills & Estates information sessions were hosted over the lunch break with a hot lunch and beverages provided. The information session is offered pro bono by staff at Woodward and Company LLP. This year we hosted two lunch and learns with about 14 people for each session and the majority of participants being seniors (85%).

Reconciliation and Building Safer Spaces

The secondary role of the Law Clinic is providing orientation and emersion for second and third year law students at the University of Victoria. The orientation includes a tour of VNFC's facilities and programing with an overview of the urban Indigenous population in the Greater Victoria Area. Students then volunteer in a variety of roles at the Community Soup Lunch. After lunch, the students participate in a sharing circle with a member of the Warriors programs.

The orientation plays a pivotal role is familiarizing students with the VNFC and with urban Indigenous Peoples before they start working in the SACs. The orientation centres relationships, responsibilities and centre safety in the SACs, as well as throughout the law students' careers.



Volunteer Program

The Volunteer Program brings people from all walks of life into the VNFC to support our many programs. Our volunteers support both our regular scheduled programs such as the Library and Community Soup Lunch, as well as the 7 special events VNFC supports each year; TRC/Orange Shirt Day, Baby Honouring Ceremony, Christmas Winter Market and Soup Lunch, Youth Two Spirit Conference, Our Women are Sacred Walk for Red Dress Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, and the Back-to-School Picnic.

Many of our volunteers join us after graduating from the Community Learning Program (CLP). The program has contributed significantly to the cultural awareness and preparedness of our volunteers and we hope to have all volunteers be graduates of CLP over the next year.

Between April 2025 and April 2026, 1,114 volunteer shifts were contributed in support of Community Soup Lunch, special events, and community programming. Volunteer participation ranged from approximately 20 to 35 volunteers weekly, increasing to as many as 45 volunteers during the holiday season.

Community Soup Lunch

Community Soup Lunch began in the early 1980s and remains one of VNFC's longest-running community programs. Each week, staff and volunteers come together to provide a meal and a welcoming space for connection, support, and belonging. The Community Soup Lunch serves around 120-180 meals every Friday with that number significantly increasing to over 200 on special occasions such as the Christmas Community Soup Lunch.

In November 2025, Community Soup Lunch coordination responsibilities shifted to include other departments to strengthen long-term sustainability and continuity of services. This transition allows multiple staff members to rotate leadership responsibilities while maintaining consistent support for volunteers and community members.

The impact of Community Soup Lunch is reflected in the words of one long-time volunteer:
"This weekly event, put together by you and your team, is such a magical place. Full of care, generosity and joy, offering the community not only food but also support and a place to connect. You feed the heart, the soul, and the body of a whole community." **-R. Arnold**



Transitions and Challenges

The Volunteer Program demonstrates strong community impact but faces significant capacity challenges following the loss of a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator in August 2025. One challenge is the volunteer database which houses over 600 volunteer records, 435 identified as active. Lack of capacity means various team members must support our volunteers “off the side of their desk” resulting in inconsistent records, onboarding and communication. Even more important, we lack the ability to fully engage, support, and develop this valuable community resource, putting VNFC at risk of a major loss of relationship capital and extra program support carefully built over many years.

These problems are exacerbated by the limitations of the excel spreadsheet used for tracking. While several databases have been explored, without dedicated staff we cannot onboard a new system.

Despite growing interest from community members, students, and program graduates, current staffing limitation means an inability to effectively support and mobilize volunteers. A dedicated Volunteer Coordinator would strengthen recruitment, retention, and training; improve communication and cultural safety support; expand partnerships; and allow staff to focus on program delivery, ultimately increasing capacity and advancing reconciliation, relationship-building, and community wellness.



Leadership & Advocacy

This team focuses on systems change through mobilizing all forms of leadership, advocating for urban Indigenous Peoples, and centering community-based research in response to the vacuum of information about urban Indigenous Peoples.

Victoria Urban Indigenous Leadership Table (VUILT)

VUILT formed in 2021 and is a coalition of local urban Indigenous leaders with ongoing identifiable relationships within the urban Indigenous community of Greater Victoria and provides space for amplification of community voice in efforts to impact decision-making and affect system-change across sectors. This year the leaders created a shared Navigation Guide that speaks to their function and processes as a leadership table. Also, Co-Chairs Janice Simcoe and Ron Rice, supported the provincial urban Indigenous engagement process hosted by Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation in various regions of the province.

Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue (VURD)

The VURD Steering Committee formed in 2018 and is a shared leadership space of Indigenous people and allies working to activate reconciliation in south Vancouver Island. In the past, engagement focused on south Vancouver Island as a region, but this year the Steering Committee started looking at each municipality individually. Some show consistent active reconciliation efforts, while others seem to have zero participation. VURD identified a research funding opportunity and partnered with the Salish Sea Hub to apply for the Recognition to Action (R2A) Project: Co-Creating Municipal Tools for Urban Indigenous Wellbeing and Reconciliation. The application was successful, receiving funding for 3 years, January 2026 to December 2028.

Salish Sea Hub (SSH)

The SSH is a partnership with VNFC, University of Victoria and Victoria Foundation, and began in 2019. It is a community-based participatory research (CBPR) hub focused on bringing research out of academic institutions and into the community to be used to co-develop solutions to our most pressing challenges by engaging communities from the start. This past year the SSH hosted 2 social networking events, both of which sold out, and renewed our Memorandum of Understanding as a member of the Global Knowledge for Change (K4C) Consortium with the UNESCO Chair in CBPR and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. SSH is one of 24 K4C hubs globally.

Additionally, SSH supported VNFC with 2 research projects this past year. The first was a public survey of the south Vancouver Island urban Indigenous community about their level of awareness of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Students from UVic's CBPR course helped community advisors design a survey, which launched in October 2025 for 3 months. Raw data has been shared with advisors for analysis,

and a community report will be shared by October 2026. Community learning opportunities will be designed based on findings.

The other project is the VURD R2A Project, which began in January 2026 with an Initiating Phase that runs to July 2026. After that we will finalize our research and evaluation plan, including our submission for ethics approval. All research projects are presented to VUILT, where we seek guidance and recruit advisors.

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Early Childhood Supports Programs

Aboriginal Infant Development

Aboriginal Supported Child Development

Indigenous Speech Language Pathology

Neurodiversity

Xa Xe SṮELIṮḴEL̓ Daycare

Aboriginal Infant Development

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

Staff

Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports
Robi Elfurjani, AIDP Manager
Maria Sampson, AIDP Consultant and Cultural Support Consultant
Eduardo Tahim – AIDP Consultant
Misun Mun – AIDP Consultant

The AIDP team works with infants up to the age of 5 years old. 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.

Program Highlights

AIDP is currently accepting new clients, and there is no waitlist! We have continued to have a strong relationship with our ECD program, and work with them weekly helping new mothers and children. We have also been able to get out into community, and start rebuilding connection. This year, we have added another AIDP consultant, which brings our staffing level up to the highest we have had in many years.

Stats

AIDP currently has 34 active files, and no waitlist.

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.

Department Goals

Now that we have multiple consultants, we would like to expand and deepen our connection with community.

Aboriginal Supported Child Development

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

Staff

Kari-Ann Leadbitter, Director of Early Childhood Supports
Mary Ann Charlie, Program Administrator
Mariel Macasaquit – ASCD Manager
Marcus Santos – ASCD Consultant
Nadia Robinson – ASCD Consultant
Liv Samuel – ASCD Consultant

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. 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

The Early Childhood Supports Director is now a trainer for Ages and Stages Questionnaire training, which will allow all staff to be fully trained and up to date. The waitlist for our program is approximately one year. We have been working in collaboration with the AIDP, Neurodiversity, ISLP, and Daycare teams, and have been able to spend more time helping support workers.

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.

Our department goals include getting more children into daycare with the support workers and increase distribution of our resources to help children with extra support needs.

Stats

We have 77 active files, and a waitlist of 49.

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

Caitlin Annable – Speech Language Pathologist
Sarah Robinson, Speech Language Pathologist
Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter

Program Highlights

ISLP has groups happening in local communities, and we have a small waitlist due to having 2 Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) once again. We've been collaborating with the Early Years programs to help best service community and continue our relationships with mainstream SLPs and School District. Our language groups continue at VNFC, and we've also had hearing screenings done for community.

Stats

We have 36 children in our program, and will add 10 more children by next fiscal.

Training

We attended a Speech and Hearing conference this fiscal year.

Challenges

We continue to maintain an ongoing waitlist of children who require our services, and have had ongoing challenges trying to recruit and hire more SLPs to work at VNFC. With more programs taking place at the VNFC, it can sometimes be challenging to access suitable spaces to meet families, or access vehicles to travel to families.



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 Keyworker has been working with the Elder's Team and AIDP Team to support the Early Years programming.

Program Highlights

We attended the FASD conference, and started to rebuild connections with the FASD network. We also hosted an FASD for children, youth, and families.

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 13 files and no waitlist.

Participant Quotes

"Thank you!"



Xa Xe SŦELITḴEL̲-Daycare

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

Staff

Director of Early Childhood Supports- Kari-Ann Leadbitter
Manager – Daniela Santos
Team Leads – Christina and Lina (Acting) for Sue Ann (on leave)
Infant Team – Lina, Fe, Gurpreet, Makoto, Angela
Toddler Team – Lina, Eliza, Pawandeep, Loida, Leosel
3-year-old Team – Christina, Yuko, Juyon, Rafaela, Pawandeep, Junghyeon
Break Coverage – Valentina Wisdom Keeper - Eileen

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

This year, we've been having Music Mondays with the Victoria Conservatory of Music and incorporated more culture into daycare activities. Monthly pro-D days have given staff members the opportunity to learn and use new skills in the classroom as well as create opportunities for team building.

We've partnered with the ASCD program to share knowledge and teachings, and have been having Kids Action physical education, regalia, and traditional dance teachings. Monthly parent circles have been facilitated to give parents the opportunity to discuss what is going on in daycare and share teachings with caregivers.

There has been learning on the land, gardening, and nature exploration, and there is now traditional language in each classroom and hallway.

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"

Family Development & Food Security Programs

Awakening the Warrior Within

Career, Employment & Education Team

Early Childhood Development

Family Services Team

Indigenous Youth & Family Liaison

Jordan's Principle

Kitchen

Parent Supports

Women's Wellness

Young Warriors

Youth & Community Leadership

Awakening the Warrior Within



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

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.
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.

Year in Review
This year, Awakening the Warrior Within continued to make a powerful impact, running 88 group opportunities that met twice a week over six-week sessions. Approximately 184 participants engaged in the program, with many returning graduates also choosing to region for continued connection and growth. For the 11th consecutive year, Glen and Sharon supported a group of men in attending the Sundance ceremony in Merritt, deepening their cultural and spiritual journeys.





Career, Employment, and Education Resources (CEER)

Respectfully submitted by Sophia Gu, CEER Team Lead

Staff

Sophia Gu, CEER Team Lead
Alexandria Dubois-Hache, Administrative/Events Coordinator
Herman Henry, Indigenous Liaison & Career Transition Guide
Bryan Adair, Career & Education Guide
Julie Olson, Career & Education Guide
Lorna Bartleman, Career & Education Guide
Anika Afflick, CEER Services Trainee



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

- Held **Career Corner Grand Opening** on April 30, 2025, with 10 community organizations and 75+ attendees coming to celebrate the newly renovated CEER space!
- Organized first **Indigenous Hiring Fair** at VNFC since the pandemic on May 7, 2025 with 25 employers and 120+ jobseekers in attendance.
- Welcomed 150+ attendees at our **second annual Indigenous Scholarship Night** event on December 10, 2025.
- Hosted **14 info sessions** to share employment & training opportunities with community.
- Ran **18 group trainings** for various certifications & skills:
    - 1 Entrepreneurship program
    - 1 Heavy Equipment Operator course
    - 1 Education Assistant/Community Mental Health Worker program (continuing)
    - 2 Microsoft Office computer skills trainings
    - 2 Forklift trainings
    - 3 First Aid & CPR trainings
    - 4 FoodSafe level 1 trainings
    - 4 Driver's L trainings
- **426 drop-in CEER supports provided at weekly Indigenous Job Club.**
- **479 community members** who accessed CEER training, sponsorship, programs, or events.

Year in Review

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.



Launching the Career Corner

We began the 2025-26 fiscal year by launching the newly renovated Career Corner, a career resource centre & learning space for community members accessing CEER services. The Grand Opening event included a Community Resource Fair, free barbering & hairstyling, mock interview clinic, visioning activity with Elder Sky, and tours of the newly renovated CEER space. We followed that event up with a successful & well-attended Indigenous Hiring Fair the following week, in partnership with WorkBC. These two back-to-back events showcased for community what our CEER team has to offer and increased our visibility with local employers & organizations, building the groundwork for future partnerships.

Growing Demand for CEER Services

As we increase our presence in community, there has also been a steady increase in demand for CEER services. Job Club participation grew 44% year-over-year (Q1-2024 vs Q1-2025), with as many as 25-30 community members utilizing this drop-in job search program each week. This fiscal year, our team witnessed signs of a tightening job market, as provincial government & major local employers reduce/pause hiring in the face of economic uncertainty, e.g. budget cuts, labour strikes, and tariffs. Jobseekers are taking longer to find employment, with some taking as long as six months to get a successful job offer. Youth unemployment rate in Canada has been at the highest it has been in 15 years (excluding the pandemic).

New Program Offerings

To combat this challenging environment, we actively pursued grant funding for specialized training opportunities that would make Indigenous community members more employable. We also diversified our program offerings, leading to more career options and higher paying jobs.
Entrepreneurship: In May 2025, we launched a new 10-week Indigenous entrepreneur program called PAKEN̲ ("to blossom" in SENĆOŦEN). We partnered with a national organization called Rise to provide business skills training with a focus on mental health for aspiring early-stage small business owners. We are proud of our 11 PAKEN̲ graduates who each received a certificate & $500 completion bonus to jumpstart their business!

Work Experience Placements: In September 2025, we were awarded the Work Experience Opportunity Grant (WEOG) from United Way BC to run paid work experience placements for Indigenous community members on income or disability assistance to gain workplace skills and enhance their resumes for re-entering the workforce. We hosted 5 participants in this initial round, who collectively contributed 840 hours of work experience at VNFC in various departments, including CEER, Kitchen, and Garden.

Heavy Equipment Operator: In January 2026, we offered a 5-week Heavy Equipment Operator program, with 4 participants successfully completing 100 hours of hands-on machine training on skid steer and excavator. This was a new partnership with IHE Operator School, as well as District of Saanich which provided space in-kind for the hands-on portion of the training. We are also grateful to Coast Salish Employment & Training Society for providing additional funding to support this program.

Education Assistant/Community Mental Health Worker: *In* January 2026, based on the support of local school districts and other organizations facing labour shortage, the province awarded us a Community Workforce Response Grant to run a fully funded 10-month Education Assistant/Community Mental Health Worker program. Education Assistants are in demand across BC and on Vancouver Island with a healthy starting wage, and we are excited to be training Indigenous community members who will not only go into a financially sustainable career path but also serve as role models for future Indigenous students.

Postsecondary Education
Over the course of 2025-26, our CEER team funded and supported 38 Indigenous postsecondary students in a broad range of programs, from welding to bookkeeping to Teaching English as a Foreign Language. 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.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Finally, we would like to thank our funders, Coast Salish Employment and Training Society (CSETS), BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, United Way BC, University of Victoria, and Camosun College, for their financial support. We also owe gratitude to our many partners:

- Alert First Aid
- Camosun College IECC
- District of Saanich
- Discovery Community College
- Drivewise
- Gillen Group
- IHE Operator School
- Rise
- Serge's Real Life Driving School
- THRIVE Society
- University of Victoria First People's House
- Victoria Industrial Safety Training
- WorkBC Centre Victoria

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 Rebecca Mabee, Director of Family Development and Food Security

Staff:
Erin – Family Support
Trina – Family Support
Brenda – Social Worker
Aly – Social Worker
Trish – Practicum Student

OUR VISION

To create a stronger Indigenous Families with respect and dignity.
By bring back the traditional way of life.
By created a stronger balance in a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual way of life.

The FST is mandated to advocate and provide supports for Urban Indigenous Families/individual who are involved with MCFD. Our goal and dreams are to have Indigenous Children stay out of care of MCFD and/or return to their families and communities.

The team provides service to our community members through case management, advocacy, case conferencing, administrative support, referrals to both internal VNFC and external resources, transportation, and supportive attendance at appointments, court and case conferences. The team support community members to access different resources such as counseling, legal services and health services.

Year in Review
The team develop, implement, monitor, and complete individualized risk reduction plans tailored to everyone's needs and goals. We provide ongoing support through skill development, education, mentorship, and the promotion of cultural continuity. Assist individuals with parenting, communication, budgeting, life skills, nutrition, housing, and accessing social assistance programs and community resources. We offer emotional, spiritual, and culturally grounded support by incorporating traditional teachings, values, and practices. We encourage personal growth and self-determination, and strengthening of community connections through culturally safe, respectful, and strengths-based approaches.

The Family Services Team supported 102 families during the year. The team has seen some wonderful growth within families.

VNFC became a Trusted Source this year, which means that staff were trained and are certified to do the status card applications. We have monthly clinics and trained staff will do individual appointments.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We want to thank Dana from Justice Access Centre and Melissa Armstrong from the Ministry of Poverty Reduction. We thank South Island Wellness, The Aboriginal Coalition to end Homelessness, Victoria Sexual Assault Centre and Camus Lelum. We thank all the community agencies supporting our community.



Intake

Staff

Janessa

Year in Review

Our 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. Our intake staff also provides brief service supports during the morning hours, which includes status card applications. The intake staff have seen or talked with over 2000 community members seeking support.

Indigenous Youth and Family Liaison SD61

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

Staff
Shiloh – Esquimalt Highschool
Sage – Quadra Elementary and Shoreline 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.

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



Jordan's Principle

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

Staff:
Angela Heaton – Senior Service Coordinator
Danielle Low – Regional Service Coordinator
Kelsey Sutton – Service Coordinator
Lisa Raynes – Service Coordinator
Ana Valle – Support Worker
Sabrina Leme – ARC Administrator

The Jordan's Principle team works to ensure equitable access to health, education, and social supports for First Nations children and youth across southern Vancouver Island. Through culturally grounded service coordination, advocacy, and collaboration, the team supports families, caregivers, communities, and service providers in accessing services and addressing barriers that impact child well-being.

Program Highlights

This fiscal year marked significant growth with the addition of two new positions that strengthened the team's capacity and regional reach.

The Regional Service Coordinator expanded service delivery beyond southern Vancouver Island and will work to strengthen relationships with First Nations communities and service providers across the Vancouver Island region while improving coordination and access to Jordan's Principle supports.

The addition of a Support Worker enhanced direct support for families experiencing complex barriers by assisting with service navigation, applications, and access to available resources. This role has increased the team's ability to provide timely, family-centred support for children with higher needs. Together, these positions have improved service accessibility, strengthened community partnerships, and increased the team's capacity to respond to the growing demand for Jordan's Principle supports.

Challenges

Throughout the year, the team continued to adapt to significant changes in the administration of Jordan's Principle by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). Ongoing policy changes, funding delays, and evolving operational requirements created challenges for families, service providers, and staff. Despite these challenges, the team remained committed to advocating for timely, equitable, and culturally responsive supports while working collaboratively with families, service providers, and ISC to minimize service disruptions.

Success Stories

Throughout the year, the Jordan's Principle team's coordination, advocacy, and commitment to culturally grounded service delivery supported timely access to specialized assessments, health and education supports, and basic necessities that reduced barriers to care and

meaningful participation for children. The team also supported the implementation of a range of group requests, enabling VNFC and local Nations to deliver culturally responsive supports that addressed the collective needs of children while strengthening community capacity to respond to priority needs.

Presentations & Outreach

The Jordan's Principle team participated in community events including National Indigenous Peoples Day at Royal Roads University and the Pacheedaht Health Fair, and conducted outreach with hospitals, primary care clinics, and the Esquimalt Nation Infant & Toddler Group. Service Coordinators shared information on Jordan's Principle supports, responded to community questions, and highlighted the legacy of Jordan River Anderson.



Stats

- 876 children supported on active caseload
- 353 children supported through group requests
- 620 individual request submissions, 61 request referrals
- 274 request approvals, 5 request denials, and 24 request escalations

Participant Quote - "I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for all of your assistance. It's been a long time coming and at times felt like it would never happen, but then everything came together with all approvals arriving at once. It's a great feeling. I really appreciate your support and your consistent professionalism in responding to all of my follow-up emails throughout the process." – Parent

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

The Jordan's Principle team acknowledges the vital support of local First Nations, service providers, and community partners in enabling coordinated, culturally grounded service delivery for children and families. We also recognize the ongoing collaboration of Indigenous Services Canada (BC Region) and VNFC leadership, which continues to strengthen the reach and impact of Jordan's Principle.

Summary/Conclusion

Over the past year, the Jordan's Principle team strengthened its capacity and regional reach while continuing to provide culturally grounded, coordinated supports to First Nations children and families across Southern Vancouver Island. Overall, these efforts contributed to improved service accessibility, stronger community relationships, and better outcomes for children and youth.

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.

Parent Supports 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.

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. This has been 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 ribbon skirts, vests, shawls, moccasins, vision boarding, beading, and drum making.

We offered two days a week of park days during our summer months, and trips to Goldstream Park. Our VNFC garden team came to programming, and we had a pumpkin patch/Halloween party in the garden. Our Speech Therapist team joined the program on Thursdays to answer any child speech questions and provide support for speech. We were part of the Baby Honouring Celebration this year. We also provided 167 group offers this year.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We want to acknowledge and thank the late Dr. Skip Dick for all his support and kindness over the years.

We appreciate and thank our Island Health nurses and Dental Hygienist that join the program every Wednesday. Thank you to:

- Maria Sampson -AIDP
- 1000x5 Books and all the volunteers who bag the books
- BC Farmers Market Program
- Cobs Bread









VNFC Community Kitchen



Respectfully submitted by Raven Hartley, Family Wellness Services Manager

Staff:

Carrie P.- Head Chef
Gerald R.- Programs Cook
Michael J.- Programs Cook
Herb K.- Shelter Cook
Shelby S.- Shelter Cook
Leonard D. - Prep Cook
Carol S. - Volunteer
Kaleb H. – Prep and Dishwasher
Ava T. – Programs Cook
Amarin H. – Programs Cook

We want to thank Kaleb, Ava, and Amarin for their work over the year, and wish them the best in their new journeys.

Year in Review

This year, the Community Kitchen continued to serve nutritious meals and create opportunities for connection within our community, over 80,000 meals.
One of the highlights of the year was our Community Soup Lunch program. The kitchen takes pride in preparing meals that bring the community together and fosters an environment that allows multi-generational families to eat together and connect. These moments remind us that food is about more than nourishment—it is about bringing people together.

The Kitchen staff have been thrilled to hear positive feedback from our daycare program. Daycare staff shared stories of the kids trying new foods and enjoying them. Knowing that we are helping the little ones expand their food experiences is a success for our team.
As with many food programs, we faced challenges throughout the year. Rising food costs continued to impact our purchasing power, while the need for food support in our community continued to grow. In addition, equipment breakdowns created unexpected obstacles and required staff to adapt quickly to ensure service.

Despite these challenges, the Kitchen team demonstrated remarkable dedication and resilience. Some of the busiest service days in recent memory were met with teamwork, flexibility, and a commitment to ensuring community members receive healthy meals.
As we look ahead, we remain committed to providing accessible, nutritious food while fostering connection, culture, and community.

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

We are grateful to our co-workers, volunteers, partners, donors, and community members for their ongoing support and look forward to another year of serving together

We remain deeply grateful for the support of local farms and food donors. Their generous contributions have helped us provide fresh, high-quality ingredients to our community while strengthening relationships with local food producers. A huge thank you to FarmFolk CityFolk and North Star Organics for their continued support.

Women’s Wellness



Respectfully submitted by: Raven Hartley, Family Wellness Service Manager

Staff:

Brittany Davies, Program Coordinator

Raven Hartley, Family Wellness Services Manager

Program Overview:

This year marked a period of transition and growth for our women's programming.
In the winter of 2025, we partnered with Sixth Sense Self Defence to offer a six-week Women's Empowerment Training. The program was designed to help participants reconnect with their own strength by exploring healthy boundaries, personal safety, and practical self-defence skills. Seven women participated in the training, building confidence while connecting with one another in a supportive environment.

Following a review of our programming, we concluded the "Awakening the Warrior Woman Within" program and began developing a new initiative: Women's Wellness. While maintaining a focus on supporting women who have experienced gender-based violence, Women's Wellness has been redesigned to place choice and individual needs at the centre of the healing journey.

Women's Wellness is an eight-week, strength-based program that explores topics such as healing the inner child, creating safety plans, establishing healthy boundaries, and building self-awareness. From intake through graduation, participants are empowered to shape their own experience, ensuring the program is responsive to their goals and readiness.
Over the past year, significant time was dedicated to curriculum development, planning, and strengthening the program framework. We are excited to launch the first Women's Wellness cohort in the fall and look forward to supporting women as they continue their journeys toward healing, wellness, and empowerment.

Self-Defence participant quote: “With the start of each session and throughout each session, the VNFC Staff and Yvette were very cognisant, compassionate and reassuring in creating a safe space to meet, learn and share. We were regularly reminded to let them know if we were uncomfortable or needed a break. We were regularly given compassion, being commended and told that we are courageous… Having had some previous counselling and done other programs, this has really helped me to understand and make sense of concepts I had heard of before.”

Young Warriors

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

Staff

Cecilia – Program Coordinator
Montana – Co-Facilitator
Elder Jean Smith

Young Warriors is an empowerment program developed to support the lack of programming for ages 7-12 in Victoria, developed to support the lack of programming for these ages. Topics explored include:
Feelings: Identifying big and complex feelings, how to cope with and express strong feelings in a healthy way, learning about Empathy.
Bullying: Types of bullying, understanding why bullies act mean, how to ask for help.
Relationships and Boundaries: Types of relationships we have with the people in our lives, healthy vs. unhealthy relationships, respecting the boundaries of others and expressing our own.
Health and Wellness: The Medicine Wheel teachings, finding balance in our lives, how to live a healthy lifestyle.
Culture: Devils club beaded necklaces (Activity lead by elder Jean Smith), Medicine Bags (Activity lead by Facilitators and accompanied by Jean Smith), each activity includes discussions and teachings from our elder.

During the summer, staff facilitated Home Alone training for 8 to 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.

Year in Review

We ran our 18th cohort since developing the program. We had 35 youth take the program this year. We offered Pro-D activities and the Home Alone Program.

The youth were not shy to share and talk with each other. These youth each brought their own knowledge and spunky personalities and were not afraid to be themselves. At the end of the program, they left happy, with hearts full and new friendships formed. We were once again joined by Elder Jean, who the youth really enjoy learning from. The youth always love the Devils Club teachings that Jean shares. At the end of the cohort, the youth acknowledged and thanked us with big emotions knowing it was the last day.

Our biggest victory was having all the youth who joined become friends on the 1st day. This is our second in-person session, so it is a huge success when they come in behind their parents being shy, then leave knowing they have friends in the program. They all came to this program not knowing each other and at the end of the 1st session everyone was laughing and having fun, and friends with one another.

Participant Quotes

“Jean is now everyone’s Grandma.”
“I hope we can see you again.”
“I am happy I have friends here.”





Youth And Community Leadership



Gratefully submitted by Marcus McCullough, Youth Program Lead

Staff

Kailyn Johnson – Manager
Marcus McCullough – Program Lead
Katrina Waldron – Youth Support Worker
Claryssa Duerden – Youth Support Worker
Breanna Durham – Youth Support Worker
Aly Waddell – Youth Support Worker
Chantel Daniels – Youth Support Worker
Leo Devonshire – Youth Drop-In Program Coordinator
Sef Masalolsalo – Youth Drop-In Program Coordinator

For the past year, the youth team staff at the VNFC have worked together to create a safe and welcoming space for the urban Indigenous youth who access our programs, from drop-in evenings to one-to-one outreach and all the special events and activities in between.

There are currently two programs under the Youth Team's umbrella of support: One-to-one Youth Support Services (which serves youth aged 12-25) and the RAVE Youth Drop-in Centre (which serves youth aged 12-18).

Our one-to-one youth support workers provide wrap around services, aiding youth in navigating systems, advocating, and meeting once a week to help work towards personal and life goals. The staff in this program meet once a week with their assigned caseload which averages 15-20 individuals. Our RAVE Drop-in Program provides a safe and judgment free space for youth to hang out in the evening, providing culturally relevant educational opportunities for the attending youth. The youth team expresses their immense gratitude for Aly Waddell and Claryssa Duerden's dedication to our programs. Both left the youth department after multiple years of dedication to pursue other opportunities in community, leaving behind them a beautiful legacy of support and commitment to our urban Indigenous youth.

Program Highlights

2025-2026 was a year of connections and growth for the Youth Team. Our Youth community "took over" the big city in Vancouver for the annual Gathering our Voices Youth Conference. Ten urban Indigenous Youth were afforded the opportunity to explore downtown Vancouver and congregate with their peers from across British Columbia in one of the most scenic cities on Earth. The connections and skills they learned during the three-day event are ones that will follow them through their lives.

In February of 2026, the VNFC opened all its doors for the annual 2SLGBTQ+ Gathering here at the Centre. All three of the local school districts attended this incredibly popular event that showcases the power of inclusivity and acceptance. Many teachers and school chaperones

communicated how much the local youth community looks forward to this yearly event and how much it has grown over the years. The prevailing themes facing the youth community are ones of long waitlists and scarcity of professional supports but with the resiliency and collaborative skills the youth are developing through the VNFC community, no obstacle is too great to overcome.





Success Stories

“I have been with the VNFC Youth Program for over 10 years now. The staff and workers may have changed but the supports and care have always stayed the same. I’ve learned so much about myself and how I can overcome issues in my life by the support and attention the VNFC has given me will last me through the rest of my life. I’m almost 22 years old now and have been with the team for over 10 years and looking back I don’t know if I would be in the same place in life without having been here. I know I will be too old to stay in the program in a few years, but I truly feel I can do anything with my life now and owe a lot of that to the workers that took the extra time to talk with me and help me grow as a person. I tell anyone that is new in town or going through stuff to reach out and that it’s okay to ask for help.”

Partnerships and Acknowledgments

The VNFC Youth Team would like to recognize some of our community partners and local organizations that share in the gift of youth related service: Hulitan Family & Community Services Society; Surrounded By Cedar; Warm Gift Shop; Threshold Housing; Saanich Parks and Recreation; University of Victoria’s Science Venture





Properties, Homes & Living Supports Department Programs

Properties, Homes & Living Supports

Shelter



Properties, Homes and Living 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 (PHLS) program provides safe, stable, and culturally responsive housing for Urban Indigenous individuals, couples, and families across 77 housing units, ranging from studio suites to three-bedroom homes. Through a holistic and culturally grounded approach, our team supports housing stability while fostering dignity, self-determination, and meaningful connections to community.

Our work extends beyond property management to include housing stabilization, homelessness prevention, rental subsidy administration, tenant advocacy, landlord engagement, housing application assistance, move coordination, and culturally safe programming. By working alongside community members and service partners, we help individuals and families obtain and maintain long-term housing while strengthening community wellbeing.

Program Highlights

The 2025–2026 fiscal year was one of growth, collaboration, and meaningful change for the Properties and Housing Supports team.

A significant milestone this year was the successful transition following the sale of Fernwood House. Through careful planning and close collaboration with tenants, housing providers, and community partners, every resident was successfully relocated into appropriate housing while maintaining continuity of supports.

The team also continued to expand opportunities for cultural connection and tenant engagement by offering community gatherings, wellness activities, traditional teachings, and life-skills programming. These initiatives strengthened relationships, encouraged community participation, and promoted overall wellbeing while supporting housing stability.

Year in Review

As housing affordability and availability continued to decline across the region, the need for housing supports remained high. Throughout the year, the PHLS team remained focused on providing responsive, culturally safe services that helped Urban Indigenous individuals and families overcome barriers to housing and maintain long-term stability.

Our work extended far beyond housing placement. Through advocacy, collaboration with landlords and community partners, individualized case planning, and ongoing tenant supports, we continued to walk alongside community members at every stage of their housing journey. Whether helping someone secure their first home, prevent eviction, or navigate a complex housing transition, our team remained committed to meeting people where they were with compassion, respect, and cultural humility.

Challenges

The ongoing housing crisis continues to present significant barriers for Urban Indigenous individuals and families. Rising rental costs, limited housing availability, increasing support needs, and complex housing systems require creative problem solving and strong community partnerships.

Despite these challenges, our team continued to advocate for tenants, build relationships with landlords and housing providers, and work collaboratively with community agencies to secure safe and sustainable housing solutions.

Program Statistics

Housing & Homelessness Prevention

- 77 housing units managed
- 57 community members successfully housed
- 15 new tenants welcomed into PHLS housing
- 230 housing intakes completed
- 520 rental subsidies administered
- 21 community members supported with housing moves and transitions

Service Delivery

- Housing Supports Team: 23,689
- Properties Team: 19,305



Team & Program Events

The PHLS team hosted 20 community events and cultural activities throughout the year, promoting wellness, cultural connection, and tenant engagement.

- Harvest Gathering
- Spring BBQ
- Drum Making Workshop
- Rattle Making Workshop
- Medicine Bag Teachings
- Elk Hide Harvest
- Art Therapy
- Land-Based Learning
- Health & Wellness Programming
- Budgeting and Financial Literacy Workshops

Success Story

The successful relocation of all seven Fernwood House tenants represents one of the team's proudest accomplishments this year. Through individualized planning, advocacy, and collaboration with housing partners, every tenant secured appropriate housing while maintaining access to the supports they needed. This achievement reflects the strength of our partnerships and our commitment to ensuring housing transitions occur with dignity, compassion, and continuity of care.

Partnerships & Acknowledgements

Our successes this year were made possible through the strong relationships we continue to build with housing providers, Indigenous communities, health partners, municipalities, and community organizations. Together, these partnerships have strengthened housing stability, expanded access to resources, and improved outcomes for Urban Indigenous individuals and families. We extend our sincere gratitude to all of our partners for their continued collaboration, trust, and shared commitment to creating safe, stable, and culturally welcoming communities.

Summary

The 2025–2026 fiscal year demonstrated the strength of a collaborative, culturally grounded approach to housing support. Through advocacy, partnership, and compassionate service delivery, the PHLS team continued to create opportunities for Urban Indigenous individuals and families to access safe, stable, and welcoming housing.

We are deeply grateful to our tenants, community members, Elders, partners, and funders whose trust and collaboration make this work possible. Together, we continue to strengthen our community by building pathways to housing stability, connection, and belonging. We raise our hands to everyone who supported our work this past year and look forward to continuing this important work in the year ahead.







VNFC Shelter Program

Respectfully submitted by Diego Enciso, Shelter Program Manager

Staff:
Shelter Program Manager – Diego E.
Overnight Supervisor – Ustat K., Niyat M., David A.
Support Workers – Brian M., Andres M., Ben H., Cindy L., Earl M., Jessica E., Karol A., Nicholas O., Olumide I., Curtis R.

2025 has been a year of tremendous growth for the VNFC Shelter Program. As we continue our work on the traditional territories of the lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples, including the Songhees and Xʷsepsəm (Esquimalt) Nations, and acknowledge the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, we express our sincere gratitude to these Nations for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial and for allowing us the privilege of serving our vulnerable community members on their territories. We recognize and respect their enduring connections to the land, waters, culture, and community. We remain committed to providing culturally grounded, compassionate, and inclusive services for our community

This year marked a significant period of growth and impact for the Shelter Program. We expanded our capacity from 25 to 50 beds, transitioned to year-round operations, and served more than 11,000 guest stays. Over the course of the year, we provided more than 30,000 nutritious meals and delivered over 60,000 points of service. We also added a second shelter van, strengthened partnerships with community agencies, and continued to offer a wide range of essential supports, including safe shelter, nutritious meals, transportation, laundry and shower facilities, cultural support, and housing assistance. These achievements reflect our ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of our community with dignity, compassion, and care.

For many individuals experiencing homelessness, the shelter is far more than a place to sleep—it is a place to heal, rebuild, reconnect with community, and move forward with dignity. Every day, our staff work alongside guests to address immediate needs while supporting longer-term goals of wellness, housing stability, cultural connection, and self-determination. The growth achieved in 2025 reflects not only an expansion of services, but a deeper commitment to creating pathways toward hope, belonging, and lasting change.

What's new at the Shelter:

- 50 Beds Per Night: Our shelter capacity doubled from 25 to 50 guests.
- Open Year-Round: The shelter now operates throughout the year.
- Two Shelter Vans: Expanded transportation services allow us to reach more guests.
- Stronger Community Partnerships: Including BC Housing, Pacifica Housing, Saanich Police Department, and many other community agencies.

Investing in staff development remains a key priority to ensure guests receive safe, effective, and culturally responsive support. This year, staff participated in a wide range of professional training opportunities, including Occupational First Aid, Naloxone Administration, HIFIS,

ASIST Suicide Intervention, VNFC Community Action Learning (CAL), Cultural Safety, and Trauma-Informed Practice.

Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening cultural competency and support services rooted in Indigenous values, teachings, worldviews, and ways of knowing. Through culturally informed training and ongoing learning opportunities, staff are better equipped to provide respectful, holistic care that honors Indigenous traditions, fosters meaningful relationships, and supports the healing and well-being of the individuals we serve. These training initiatives reflect our commitment to continuous learning, excellence in service delivery, and creating a safe and welcoming environment for all guests.

Housing Update

17 Guests Successfully Housed in 2025! A significant increase from the previous year.

Housing remains one of our primary goals. Working alongside BC Housing, Pacifica Housing, Waterview Apartments, My Place Transitional Housing, Bridge Street Transitional Housing, and other community partners, the shelter program has successfully assisted 17 guests in obtaining permanent housing. Every housing placement represents a life changed and a step toward long-term stability.

We are particularly proud that, to date, none of the guests housed through our program in 2025 have returned to homelessness, demonstrating the effectiveness of the supports provided and the guests' success in maintaining stable housing. This outcome highlights the importance of collaborative housing partnerships, individualized support planning, and ongoing case management in helping individuals achieve lasting housing stability.

Guest Feedback



“The VNFC is the best! You feed us, we can shower and do our laundry. The VNFC keeps me alive!” -Lawrence C.

“It’s the only safe place where I can sleep peacefully and the staff is caring and make you feel that you belong there” -Aimee P.

“The VNFC has been absolutely amazing!!! The staff have been a huge help and they’ve been a huge life saver!!! I’m very grateful to the VNFC and I’ve enjoyed telling my bad Dad jokes to them Thank You VNFC for everything u do” -Amber D.

“The shelter has been a second home to me during this hard time in my life. I’m really grateful for the help” -Terrance A.

“I am beyond grateful for the hospitality and staff. The kindness is definitely changing people’s situation for the better. Davis is tha man! P.S. the food is amazing. Thank You” -G

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the staff members who have recently departed from our team: **Jon C. (Supervisor), Davis T. (Supervisor), Noah C., Lilly S., and Brin R. (Support Workers)**. Their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to supporting our guests have made a meaningful impact on both the shelter program and the community we serve. We thank them for their contributions and wish them continued success and fulfillment in their future endeavors.

One of the most consistent pieces of feedback we receive from guests is appreciation for the quality of our meals. The kitchen team continues to provide nutritious, welcoming food that has earned a strong reputation throughout Victoria's unhoused community. Their work goes far beyond meeting a basic need—it creates comfort, dignity, and a sense of belonging for those we serve. Special thanks to **Carrie, Shelby, Herb**, and the entire kitchen team for the care, dedication, and hard work they bring every day. Their commitment has helped build a lasting reputation for excellence and compassion within our community.

Looking Ahead

The VNFC Shelter Program continues to provide more than just a bed for the night. Every day, our team works to ensure guests have access to safe shelter, nutritious meals, transportation, laundry facilities, showers, housing support, community resources, and compassionate staff who genuinely care about their well-being. For many individuals, the shelter program serves as an important first step toward reconnecting with services, securing housing, improving health outcomes, and rebuilding stability in their lives.

As homelessness continues to impact our community, the need for accessible and culturally supportive services remains greater than ever. Through the dedication of our staff, volunteers, community partners, and supporters, we remain committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment where every guest is treated with respect, dignity and compassion.

We are proud of the progress made this year, including expanding to 50 beds, transitioning to year-round operations, strengthening staff training, increasing transportation services, and supporting guests in securing housing. We look forward to continuing this important work and serving our community for years to come.



Wellness & Health Department Programs



Camas Lelum Primary Care Clinic

Food & Medicine Garden

Health Support & Wellness Services

Indigenous Culture & Language

Indigenous Wellness Providers

Mental Health & Substance Use

Territory for the Arts

Camas Lelum Primary Care Clinic

Respectfully Submitted by Kaleih Lafleur, Camas Lelum Manager

Primary Care Team

Director: Grey Showler, RN
Manager: Kaleih Lafleur
Medical Office Assistants: Anton Recalma, Jessica Gray
Registered Nurses: Ally Dodds RN, Angie McNeil RN, Michelle Sargent RN, Torrie Tennant RN
Midwife: Melanie Mason
Nurse Practitioners: NP Danielle Linton, NP Elizabeth Lofts, NP Gabrielle Parizeau, NP Hannah Roy, NP Lauren Hanson, NP Tarah Reece
Physicians: Dr. Ami Brosseau, Dr. Anne McGladdery, Dr. Bilal Bagha, Dr. Frank Nezil, Dr. Kate Elliott, Dr. Lourens Perold.

Camas Lelum Primary Care Clinic delivers culturally safe, longitudinal primary health care to urban Indigenous community living in the greater Victoria area. Our clinic resides near the Gorge on Tillicum Road while we continue to provide outreach to the main site of the VNFC. The VNFC clinic now features Midwifery, Medical Social Work, and 3 days of Primary Care Providers seeing patients. We provide outreach to Songhees, Kosapsum, Sc'ianew and Pacheedaht Nations. Most recently, we have begun outreach to collaborate with Surrounded By Cedar. We are continually looking at ways to reduce barriers and to provide exemplary services for Indigenous people in Victoria.

Program Highlights

We have hosted many Nurse Practitioner students throughout the last fiscal year, and pride ourselves on being a fantastic learning space for those interested in learning about Indigenous Health Care. Dr. Anne McGladdery joined our team full time and has been onboarding to reduce our wait list. Our newest outreach site at Surrounded By Cedar began this year. NP Hannah Roy has joined the team and taken over this outreach. It is difficult work, but the results have been assisting many families with stability both in physical health and in the social determinants of health. Our team continues to grow and the collaboration we have with the Nations and First Nation Primary Care Initiative shows the dedication to consistent patient care we provide.

In January of 2026, we welcomed the Federal Minister of Health Marjorie Michel to our clinic as well as Provincial Minister of Health Josie Osborne, and our own MP Stephanie McLean and Victoria MP Will Greaves.



Year in Review

We have been working through growing pains by identifying inefficiencies, streamlining processes and reducing wait times for existing patients. We are reducing wait times by making changes to our booking process and providing urgent same day spaces for those with urgent medical needs. Our RNs have been working hard to assist with Chronic Disease Management through education, support and new programming. We continued to offer culturally safe and trauma-informed care through integration of Indigenous wellness practices and community priorities into service delivery, by supporting Indigenous families navigating health systems and by participation in cultural events, ceremonies, and community gatherings. In July we rallied at the legislature grounds with our midwives to fight for continued funding, upheld the decolonized approach to midwifery and continue to exemplify that it is a large part of primary care.

Challenges

We have been working in the space for a full year and are already facing space issues. The 7 exam rooms are full each day, and our meeting room is often booked for community engagement, hosting partner meetings, and training. While we continue to onboard in a meaningful way, we find that our administrative staff have an extremely heavy workload. Our clinic operates with 2 medical office administrators for all 6 nurse practitioners, 5 doctors, 4 Nurses and a midwife. Unfortunately, the current PCN funding process does not provide sufficient funding to hire the required administrative staff. While we work through our expansive wait list, we have worked to be more effective with our onboarding.

Stats

- Total primary care visits completed: 21,729
- Number of new patients attached to a primary care provider: 508
- Outreach services delivered directly within partner Nations: In Songhees 1220 appointments; 1023 Appointments in Kosapsum; 650 appointments in Sc'ianew; 1200 appointment in Pacheedaht
- Assisted 43 people in applying for their Disability Tax Credit
- Physiotherapy: 73 appointments helping 37 different people
- Midwifery had 520 appointments seeing 75 different mothers and their babies
- Social work had 100 appointments, seeing 53 different patients
- Clinical Pharmacy had 74 appointments, seeing 22 different patients
- We provided 722 immunizations
- 1602 referrals made for specialists and medical imaging on behalf of our patients
- We welcomed 28 newborns added to our patient panel

Success Stories

There have been many successes within our clinic. Most notably we were contacted by a hospitalist requesting that we take on Primary Care for a very sick Elder. We reached out to this elder, supported their transition from their hospital discharge into our care. He would rave about the services we provide, noting that he had never felt so seen, heard and cared for. Through collaboration between our clinical team, the IWP's, social work, and counselling we were able to provide this Elder dignity, kindness, respect and love in the final months of his life. We connected his family who had been care taking to our services so that this Elder knew that we would provide the same care to his family and that they too were in good hands. He

transitioned to the next phase of his life knowing that we would care for his family with the same compassion and love that we showed him.

Community Outreach & Partnerships

We have trained and collaborated with 50 different service providers from different Nations, The FNPCI and PCN allied health providers. Educating them within our electronic medical record system, assisting in analytics, and providing effective efficiencies when offering primary care.

Camas Lelum would like to acknowledge our partnership with the Songhees, Kosapsum, Sc'ianew, 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 we continue to steadily grow, the need for primary care continues to be in high demand.



Food & Medicine Garden

Respectfully Submitted by Christina Kante, Wellness Team Manager

Staff

Julie Parrell – Garden Lead
Stephaine Sketchley – Senior Garden Support
Amy Haave- Senior Garden Support
Raelynn Proudlove – Garden Support



Overview

The Garden team was created to provide traditional medicines, improve access to locally grown produce, and run programming to help connect the VNFC community to the land. Our funding through Indigenous Reaching Homes supports programing through the lens of homelessness prevention. Through our Peer Gardening Program, we empower Indigenous people to learn and share Traditional Knowledge while earning an hourly honorarium. We also provide a natural space for community and staff to learn, unwind and connect to their cultural teachings.

Program Highlights

This year we hosted 73 events, both in community and at the center, spanning a wide range of topics. Not only did we work on growing, harvesting, and processing foods and Traditional Medicines, but we also connected over shared meals, stories, and skill sharing.

Included in this year's events was our 8-week Honour Your Health Challenge in February & March, with support from ISPARC. We called this group Breakfast Club, and we met weekly for a shared meal and a group activity or health information session. Our meetings included mindful meditation, chair yoga, medicine education & preparation, diabetes bingo, and meal prepping. We had at least 11 participants attend each week during the 8-part series and 6 wonderful facilitators who graciously shared their time and knowledge with us.

Other workshops surrounded knowledge sharing on topics such as beading, how to use a drop spindle, medicine bag making, aromatherapy, tea blending, hot-water canning, container gardening, and braiding sweetgrass. 2S & Indigiqueer days create a welcoming and safe space for Two-Spirit and/or queer Indigenous folks of all ages to connect and gather. The garden program provides a space and programming that bolsters the community's spiritual, physical & mental health. These offerings help increase knowledge, skills, and confidence in our participants so they can use what they learn in their own lives and share it with others too.

The annual Summer's end celebration also brought lots of joy to the community and has been well attended over the last two years. This year we saw about 60 folks come through the garden, to celebrate. We gathered over food, tea and gratitude for the successful growing season behind us and in honour of the harvest still to come.

We returned to Seedy Saturday in February with a VNFC table to share seeds, garden tea blends, and information about our programming. Two staff members hosted a presentation title “Gardening As An Act of Reconciliation”. It was the most attended presentation of the day, with roughly 200 people. It also brought many people to our table afterwards with questions and comments. We also spoke directly with 200 people at our table over the course of the day.

The VNFC Food and Medicine Garden 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 to grow medicines for our community as they can be expensive and hard to source otherwise. It is a space we are proud of and one we hope to keep growing year after year.

Stats

*Points of Contact – 6,972
Peer Gardeners – 10 participants
Workshops – 73 events; 199 participants

*Points of Contact includes teas we grow and prepare to serve at Community Soup Lunch, our workshop participants and peer gardeners, vegetable donations, cultural support provided, and medicine requests from community members and other organizations serving community.

Success Stories / Participant Quotes

Breakfast Club: Celebrated as a “Safe community space”, “we all became close-knitted”. One guest told us, “If you could do this every week for the rest of my life that would be for the best.”

Peer-Gardening: Last year’s youth peer gardener was able to secure a job in the produce section of a grocery store; there were a great asset to our team last summer – working their very first job in the garden.

Medicines: “Community members who have received the salves, teas, etc. tell me how grateful they are to have access to stuff like that. Recently, I had a community member who was struggling with eczema and the salve you created help clear it right up! My personal experience with the teas from the garden team, has been nothing but tasty and soothing. My moon time is super painful and the mixtures you make help ease the pain.”

Partnerships and Acknowledgements

Farm Folk City Folk (FFCF) and North Star Organic Farms (NSOF) provided organic local produce weekly from May to October, which we then shared with community and the kitchen. We would also like to acknowledge and thank Indigenous Reaching Homes and ISPARC.





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.
The community we serve have complex health and social needs, and includes Elders, people experiencing health challenges and isolation, and those impacted by intergenerational trauma. Support is available on an ongoing and long-term basis as long as people want to access services and require health support. In the Wellness Room community members access free massage, acupuncture, herbal medicine, cultural support, foot care, and more.

Program Highlights

This year we completed renovations in our Wellness Room, including new cupboards, paint, curtains, and lighting. We added artwork made by community members in the Territory for the Arts. The space feels refreshed and reenergized and there is improved privacy in the treatment rooms.

In the fall of 2025, we started planning with Camosun College Massage Therapy program and started offering treatments on site at VNFC in January 2026. With this increased offering, we have almost doubled the number of massage appointments we were able to provide this year. We expanded our footcare services, with Two Happy Feet and continued working with Vancouver Island Footcare Nurses.

We hosted monthly community Mindfulness sessions with Shima Hashemian. Staff and community members have provided positive feedback about the value of practicing mindfulness in a shared community setting.

This year we started offering Dance Circles hosted by Dance Your Ability facilitators, which is an open and inclusive dance space to invite people to move their bodies and build community pathways to healing. We offered a Free Haircut Day for Indigenous community members, which was very popular and attended by over 30 people.

Information Sessions are presentations and discussions on health-related topics, which are open to community members and staff. This year we hosted:

- Checking-In Wellness App Demonstration
- The Daily Dose Society
- BC Epilepsy Society
- FNHA Benefits
- Wills and Estates with Woodward and Company

- Vancouver Island Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Mental Health Recovery Partners South Island
- Alzheimer Society

Events

- 3rd Annual Community Care Fair planned for April 2026

Stats

- Clients for 1-1 Health Support – 30
- Points of service – 3,213
- Wellness Room and Programming
    - Cultural support – 20 dates with 250 people
    - PRC Herbal medicine – 161 appointments and participation in 2S Youth Gathering
    - PRC Acupuncture – 367 appointments
    - WCCMT Community and Staff Massage – 457 appointments
    - Camosun College Community and Staff Massage – 160 appointments
    - Footcare with registered nurse – 112 appointments
    - Community Access at PRC and WCCMT – 55 appointments
    - Mindfulness – 13 sessions with 70 participants
    - Hearing Testing with Ears to You – 8 appointments
    - Information Sessions – 8 sessions with 108 participants
    - Dance Circles – 3 sessions with 26 participants

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Island Health
Pacific Rim College – students and supervisors
West Coast College of Massage Therapy – students and supervisors
Camosun College Massage Therapy program - students and supervisors
Vancouver Island Footcare Nurses
Marty Kelertas from Two Happy Feet
Shima Hashemian – Mindfulness facilitator
Mark Atleo, Julia Atleo, John Rice, and Sky Bellefleur – Cultural Support



Indigenous Culture and Language



Respectfully Submitted by Lisa Mercure, ICL Manager

Staff
Ash Murphy, Culture Coordinator
Dale Whitford, Language Support
Ellie Dion, Language Coordinator
Lisa Mercure, Indigenous Culture and Language Manafer

The Indigenous Language and Cultural programs were established in 2018 through connecting with our staff, founding members and Elders VNFC community. We began hosting social programs for Indigenous Elders and by the fall were hosting the first Indigenous language cohort. Since that time, we have grown to include more programs, including VNFC's Urban Indigenous Language Hub, Elder & Seniors programs, and hosting Cultural workshops and events. Since 2019, we have connected 34 Elders and Seniors employed by VNFC to community support programs.

Program Highlights

Cultural Programming this year included:

- Supporting the Centre-wide Community Care Fair and ensuring Elders, with Cultural Practitioners determining cultural supports which included local Protocols from Welcoming, Opening Table, Cultural Brushings and hiring local Cultural Practitioners leading workshops to help ground participants.
- Bead Circle - we host two monthly, and both the day/evening sessions are well attended with a broad age range, with participants supporting those new to beading.

Elder & Seniors programs are popular, ranging from weekly 'After ParTEA Fridays' for crafts and socializing; monthly free bingo; Elders Tech time. This year we began our second research project on "How to build stronger support systems and connections to local services Elders & Seniors". We have seen an increase to Elders attending programs although we continue to experience multiple losses yearly. This past year, our Elder and Senior employees worked 3,084 hours within nine VNFC programs.

VNFC's Urban Indigenous Language Hub (ULH) was well attended and has been rewarding for both the Fluent Speakers/Elders and participants. This year we hosted 193 classes (1023 hours) in five distinct Indigenous languages led by 14 Fluent Speakers.

Our application for Indigenous Language funding through Canadian Heritage was again denied this year, although we received funding support through the National Association of Friendship Centres before the end of the year to continue.

Team/Program Events

Urban Language Hub Visioning
Language Advisory
World Water Day
Language Cohorts – Land Based outings
Cultural Workshops
National Indigenous Peoples' Day
Indigenous Elders Honoring Lunch
Annual Winter Indigenous Artisan Market

Success Stories

Our team hosted the Elder & Seniors Advisory to have them lead conversations on engaging Elder & Seniors to decrease their isolation. We had a great group attend, enjoy a delicious lunch, afterward helpers documented their ideas. Our tech support showed them how to use their phones to enter their response in a word cloud. We celebrated all the Tech Savvy Elders for figuring it out. Sharing one QR response cloud:



We hosted a Dene Gathering in April to gather Dene living locally and reaching the Dene community and leadership that live on their Traditional Territory. The Gathering was also set to be on the International Holocaust Day as the Dene people were recently made aware that the uranium used during this war was extracted on their territory without their knowledge of it. It was an opportunity for everyone to discuss these findings, but also to engage with healing around it through prayers, traditional foods, songs and discussion on their traditional ways and Dene laws.

"I really enjoyed the Dene Gathering and can't wait for our next meeting. Thanks for inviting me."

The Urban Indigenous Language team hosted a Nuu-Chah-Nulth gathering including Traditional food and culture. Over 75 attendees enjoyed the Ahousaht drummers and dancers sharing multiple songs, and brough out the Bear song. This resulted in more learners and a few Nuu-Chah-Nulth Speakers coming. Our team has supported the cohort to complete curriculum for classes.

One of the Fluent Speakers/Elders is a linguist who previously mentored a young one in elementary school in early 2000s to learn Prayers to share at their school assembly. Our Open House brought them back together. Now a mother in her 30's, we invited her to support the cohort as a Language Helper, with the Elder continuing to mentor her. You can see how the Elder is so grateful to now mentor this younger speaker into leading her language in her community and be her succession keeping the language moving forward.

One of the leading Elders shared: "Our language is our identity."

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

On behalf of the ILC team and Elders, we are grateful to our partners who support us with volunteering, access to spaces and funding:



Amica Retirement Living, BCAAFC, Camosun College - Eyēʔ Sqâ'lewen, Canadian Heritage, Community Action Bus, First Peoples' Cultural Council, District of Saanich, Greater Victoria Public Library, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA), Metis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), New Horizons for Seniors, New Relationship Trust, Pacific Opera Victoria, Royal BC Museum, Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary, Tsow Tun Lelum Helping House, University of Victoria - First Peoples House, Victoria Foundation, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS), Ursa Creative

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service with our Indigenous community and Elders/Old Ones and Seniors. Ninaskamon … All of our Gratitude, Respect and Honour

Indigenous 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

Overview

The Primary Care Network (PCN) Indigenous Strategy, implemented through the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC) provides access to expanded, comprehensive primary health care which includes General Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, allied health care providers and Indigenous Wellness providers (IWP). The team of Indigenous Wellness Providers (IWP) walk with the community member in their health care planning and support within an interdisciplinary framework. IWP insure the community member is supported across multiple health service interactions while providing advocacy and support within the health system to promote culturally safe experiences for Indigenous peoples: Métis, Inuit, status and non-status First Nations.
In 2025-26, IWP's with 6 FTE's worked 7184 hours, supporting 1212 community members and providing 8264 points of service.

PCN IWP program/event highlights

- PCN IWP team was grateful helping organize events including: VNFC Care Fair, Our Women Are Sacred Walk, Moose Hide walk to End Violence, National Indigenous Peoples Day at VNFC.
- PCN IWP team is happy to support VNFC community lead programs including: Indigenous Safety in Health (ISH), Community Learning Program (CPL), while also supporting community soup lunch, and VNFC cultural and wellness programs.
- PCN IWP team member supported organizing IPSARC, a health drop-in educating the importance of healthy living and healthy eating.

PCN IWP Community member highlights

- Supporting community members to emergency dental appointments, helping community members get new glasses, emergency visits to the hospital, and making sure community members reach all their daily health care appointments.
- Connecting community members to rec centres - getting LIFE passes for single parents with dependents.
- Supporting a Community Member facing eviction - referred to supports, such as VNFC Housing team and MSDPR worker; community member was not evicted, received emergency rent support from MSDPR worker and subsidy from Housing.

Community Connections Partnerships

- Island Health Indigenous Liaison Nurse, Island Health Indigenous Outreach Team, BC Cancer Indigenous Patient Navigator, Foundry, QomQem, Quadra Village Community Centre, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society, Surrounded by Cedar & Family Services, Indigenous Perspective Society, CRD Healthy Communities Planner, and Early Psychosis team, etc.

Committees & Boards Partnerships

Walking in a good way comes with supporting through actions - Committees & Boards PCN Indigenous Lead is joined with:

- VNFC Reaching Home Indigenous Community Advisory Board
- QomQem Coastal Connections Board
- Our Women are Sacred Planning committee
- Primary Care Network Indigenous Circle
- Primary Care Network Steering committee representative
- Lived Experience Peer Network Steering committee
- CRD ROM-Community Health Network Steering Committee

Network Partnerships

Community is built together; network groups are a great way to support and connect with the broader community we belong to while finding ways to support the workers supporting community:

- IOW, Indigenous Outreach Workers – PCN Indigenous Lead
- YSPN, Youth Support Peer Network - PCN Indigenous Lead and PCN IWP joined
- LEPN, Lived Experience Peer Network – Helped from the beginning and now part of steering committee – PCN Indigenous Lead and PCN IWP joined
- CRD Community Health Network – PCN Indigenous Lead joined

Challenges

The length of PCN IWP current waitlist continues to grow, which shows the need of the program. Additionally, the need of a wheelchair-friendly vehicle for community members who are wheelchair-dependant continues to be an issue.

Summary/Conclusion

We come from a shared past that hold stories of our people in Indian hospitals, residential schools, forced abortions and sterilization, while also belonging to a genocide of our culture and our people. We must remember where and why we are at this moment in time and why programs like these are important for our community as we reclaim our cultural ways. This is why the PCN IWP program is grateful to support our shared community and community members, through networks, committees, boards, VNFC community lead programs, and amazing events that show community that we are walking together to heal what was given to us from our shared past, as we find ways to gift the future with a better ground. We will continue advocate and find ways to work through the institutional racism, well also finding ways to support our community members with the growth of our waitlist.

Mental Health and Substance Use



Respectfully Submitted by Christina Kante, Wellness Team Manager

Staff

Laura Bates, Registered Clinical Counsellor
Cheryl St Amour, Registered Clinical Counsellor
Justin Pallen, Mental Health and Substance Use (MHSU) Support Worker
Christina Kante, MHSU Support Worker and Mental Health Liaison

Program Highlights

This year we continued to partner with the VNFC Indigenous Culture and Language program to offer Beading circles throughout the year. In partnership with our Wellness Room, we offered regular Cultural Support with a variety of practitioners and approaches, including cedar brushing, smudging, and other healing processes.

We welcomed the Victoria Sexual Assault Center Indigenous Counsellor on site weekly to provide support for community members who have experience sexual violence.

We received a small grant from FNHA for International Overdose Awareness Day and hosted 2 special events on August 27 and Sept. 26, 2025. We partnered with Mom's Stop the Harm and encouraged people to make purple ribbons and cedar items to remember loved ones lost to the toxic drug crisis. We provided cultural support and distributed support information, medicine tea, and Naloxone kits.

We hosted an event for Bell Let's Talk Day "Taking a Moment for Mental Health" on Jan. 23, 2026, which included a Dance Circle, Cultural Support, Community Soup Lunch, collaborative art collage, Cedar roses and tobacco ties, Devil's Club Teachings and community smudge.

Staff in this program participated in:

- Healing for the Healers Sweat lodge Ceremony with Checking-In
- Our Women Are Sacred (MMIWG) Walk
- Community Health Network Mental Health Forum
- Trusted Source Status Card and Document Verification Training (Indigenous Services Canada)
- Esquimalt Nation Health Fair
- Found in Translation (Pacific Opera, BC Museum and VNFC)
- FNHA Wellness Table (T'sou-ke, Scia'new. Pacheedaht)
- Project Reconnect
- Whole Patient, Whole Journey: Collaborating on Opioid Use Disorder Event (Victoria Division of Family Practice)
- ASIST Training (hosted by FNHA)
- Challenging Residential School Denialism
- FNHA Vancouver Island Knowledge Sharing Circle
- FNHA Treatment Referral Training

Stats

Points of Service – 6,044
Total clients – 157

Other Offerings -

- Beading Circles: 20 sessions, total of 373 participants
- Cultural Supports: 19 dates, total of 208 participants
- Mindfulness: 13 sessions, total of 70 participants

Partnerships & Acknowledgments

Island Health
First Nations Health Authority
Mom's Stop the Harm
Bell Let's Talk
CheckingIn
Victoria Sexual Assault Centre
Mark Atleo, Julia Atleo, John Rice, and Sky Bellefleur – Cultural Support



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.

Year in Review

Shona continued to offer a number of popular programs with some open to all community and others that are closed programs focused on helping community to heal through connection with art. The month-long offerings included: Let It Flow (finding your flow through art), Hello Me! (self-exploration), Repeat After Me (exploring pattern making), Feast for the Senses (exploring tactile art materials), Novel November (trying new and unusual art materials), See Where It Falls (exploring movement and sensation through art), Spring RejYOUvenation (trying new art materials) See Where It Falls (exploring art through the changing seasons.
Friday morning Community drop-in Art in the Territory for the Arts. Practicum students offer a light, fun art directive. Anyone can drop in anytime between 9:30 and noon to do some arting.

Wednesday Shona offers a Closed Art Studio for Women from 9:30-noon. Intake is done directly with Shona.

The Territory for the Arts once again hosted several Art Therapy practicum students through the Canadian International Institute of Art Therapy (CIIAT), the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute and School of Expressive Therapies out of Calgary.The Territory continues to be a safe, comfortable space for Community and is often filled with laughter, as one Community member said "This (the TFA) is my medicine and I love coming here."

VNFC received funding from the NAFC to partner with and CIIAT (Canadian International Institute of Art Therapy) to run ARTalk part two to Indigenize CIIAT's Therapeutic Arts Practitioner Program. Five Indigenous artists and an Elder came together 6 times over 3 months and met for 3 hours each time to add the information gathered in ARTalk part 1. We are looking for further funding to complete this amazing journey.





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