

2024

Annual Report

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society



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Message from the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, it is with gratitude that we reflect on the important work that the Society has done and the positive and lasting impacts that this work has had on the local community. As we look back on the challenges, growth, and achievements of the last year, we are filled with optimism for the future of our organization and the communities we serve.

This year has been a period of renewal, reflection, and significant progress. We've seen the continued dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters who make our work possible, and we've witnessed the tangible impact of our programs and services in the lives of Indigenous people in the Okanagan region and on the traditional territory of the Syilx people. Whether through cultural programming, health and wellness initiatives, or community outreach, we have worked together to create a safe, supportive, and empowering environment for the local Indigenous community.

At the same time, we recognize that there is still much to be done. The need for our services continues to grow, and we are committed to responding with innovative solutions, stronger community partnerships, and the ongoing expansion of our programs. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to listening to the voices of our community, honoring our diverse traditions, and building relationships rooted in respect, trust, and shared values.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities that lay before us. The coming year will be a time of deepening our relationships with local Indigenous communities, strengthening our capacity to deliver programs, and exploring new ways to ensure that our services are accessible, relevant, and impactful. Our work is far from finished, but we are encouraged by the momentum we've built and the growing support we've seen from our partners and the wider community.

We are also focused on organizational growth, investing in staff development, improving our operational processes, and expanding our grant-writing and fundraising efforts to ensure that we are equipped to meet the increasing demand for our services. As the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society continues to grow, we remain committed to being a hub of healing, learning, and support for Indigenous peoples as well as others in the Okanagan. Together, we are building a stronger, more vibrant future—one where our Indigenous cultures are celebrated, health and well-being are prioritized, and all people have the opportunity to thrive.

With sincere appreciation and looking forward to the coming years ahead,

KFS Board of Directors

In Memoriam

This fall, we had to say farewell for now to one of our own, Tim Vadeboncoeur.

He was described by friends as, "An absolute incredible man, who had an incredible life story of life changing transformation."

Our deepest condolences to his family and friends. Thank you for your work with us.



TIM VADEBONCOEUR

27.12.1960 - 24.09.2024



INTRODUCTION

About Us

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society was founded in 1974. We are a registered non-profit society, and donations are tax-deductible.

The Friendship Centre Movement includes the National Association of Friendship Centres, provincial associations, and Friendship Centres throughout Canada. We provide programs and services to all peoples in various life stages: infants/children, adults, and Elders.

We are always looking for volunteers to support many of our on-going programs, as well as special events. Please see 'Programs & Services' for a listing of our on-going programs and services.

Mission Statement

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society will provide for the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of all peoples through the development of community-based services, while encouraging the community to preserve, share and promote Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.

Memberships & Affiliations

- ◆ British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- ◆ National Association of Friendship Centres
- ◆ Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- ◆ British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association
- ◆ Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
- ◆ Partners In Community Collaboration (PICC)
- ◆ Journey Home

Board of Directors

- ◆ Christina Verhagen – President
- ◆ Dr. Jim Ketch – Vice-President
- ◆ Stephanie Tooke – Treasurer
- ◆ Jean-Anne Copley – Secretary
- ◆ Bill McKenna – Board Member
- ◆ Ann Bell – Board Member





Senior Staff

- Joseph Lang – Director of Operations
- Shelly Umlah – Director of Finance
- Carol Archie – Director of Human Resources
- Edna Terbasket – Director of Culture
- Dan Tiessen – Facilities Manager

Staff Contributors

- ♦ Alana Turigan, (she, her), LINC Coordinator and Team Lead
- ♦ Jim Boysis, Indigenous Community Entity Coordinator
- ♦ Kailyn Mackenzie Yahn, Department Lead of Events
- ♦ Rick Archie, Finance Admin Support
- ♦ Rhonda Worthington, Property Administrator





HOUSING

The Ki Low Na Friendship Society has two locations in diverse locations throughout the Kelowna area. Our Housing Projects are:

- i spa-us ki-low-na Heart of Kelowna Margaret's Landing

Construction Recap:

BC Housing partnership for childcare centre a success

Due to the support of Innovative Housing Consultants Inc. liaising and assisting with government bodies, the society and Chandos Construction, gave our society the support to bring the Skemxist Daycare project to fruition.

Through the operational funding by Aboriginal Head Start of British Columbia, programming began in September of 2024.

The staff and management of the daycare are excited to provide an incredible opportunity to our indigenous families in the Kelowna area to receive the use of a quality daycare designed and run for the betterment of the community.

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society teams are very thankful to the Ministry of Education and Child Care for the capital funding and to BC Housing for enabling the start of the Skemxist Daycare.

Funding occurred by means of a provisional interim loan and continued support in assisting the project management and contractor.

The project team has completed all deficiencies aside from some external work which includes repairs to the asphalt, and a few small cosmetic items scheduled for completion during the winter break.



HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

The Black Mountain area is home to our Margaret's Landing subsidised housing and consists of 36 apartment units and 14 townhouse units. This has been further enhanced by the creation and completion of the Skemxist Preschool and Daycare.

- ♦ The "I Spa Us" property at 1745 Chapman Place is home to 86 units of both affordable housing and market rent units.
- ♦ We run multiple successful programs through the main office at 442 Leon Ave.
- ♦ Outreach Programming has proven most effective at our 455 Leon Ave. location.
- ♦ The Program funding for Outreach complements the continued programming through MCFD Ministry of Child and Family Development and has been running through our location at 477 Leon Ave which has relocated to our 1330 Sylvania Crescent property.
- ♦ We were excited for the opening of our Tupa's Lodge at 2735 Richter St. in Kelowna.



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

While the Margaret's Landing property in the Black Mountain area has proven to be a desirable location, teams have to work through challenges during construction of the new Skemxist Daycare, particularly related to the loss of vegetation due to the high heat in the summer of 2023.

This resulted in a significant loss of a number of Aspen trees, which had to be replaced in spring of 2024. More work related to the replacement of trees is still required with the hopes of completing this work in the spring of 2025.

The irrigation at Margaret's Landing has been repaired as result of this work and is functioning as expected currently. This should minimise environmental effects in the future.

Working through the post construction deficiencies on the daycare site required additional coordination during post construction and resulted in required adjustments to further enhance the function of the centre and to ensure that the facility was in compliance with local authorities.

FUNDRAISING + PROGRAMMING

- The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society further assisted our tenants at Margarets Landing by running a grocery program in conjunction with the Okanagan Food Bank. A result of this success was being awarded a grant which helped to secure a steady supply of groceries for a 2-year period (2022-2024).
- We continue to run a wellness variety program on Sundays at our residences.
- Our Skemxist Daycare at 1769 Highway 33 E. Kelowna was made a reality through capital funding by the Ministry of Education and Child Care.
- Our apartment building at 1735 Chapman Pl., known as "I Spa Us", has provided affordable housing and market housing for our tenants at our 86 units. "I Spa Us" has been a comfort to many families, and hosts both sewing and drumming functions in its events room.





SUPERVISED ACCESS VISIT PROGRAM

Our Supervised Access visit Program is designed to support families involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The intent is to ensure the safety of children, and to encourage the maintenance of family relationships.

The program has a full-time program coordinator and a part-time staff. We are supporting 13 families and helping with around 20 visits per week.

Overall, the goals of the program are to maintain healthy relationships while supporting families to cope with the separation they may be experiencing, and to support children with the process of integrating back to family and/or community.

How we support families in our community:

- Encourage positive parent-child relationships.
- Coordinate and supervise visits in a comfortable setting, in the family's home, in the community or at the Center.
- Protect children from harm if a family member's behavior is in breach of specific guidelines.
- Work with families to model appropriate interaction and intervene when needed.

BY THE NUMBERS

Client Services Hours by Month

April 152	Oct 138
May 183	Nov 129
June 113	Dec 109
July 147	Jan 132
Aug 173	Feb 142
♦ Sept 146	Mar 128

**Nearly 1,700
family visits**



Visiting Rooms Upgrade

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society has a very comfortable visiting room available that all families are welcome to use located at the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society that recently received a make-over, with a number of new toys and activities added for the families to enjoy.

Funding for this program is provided by the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development

FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM

The Family support Program's goal is to assist Urban Indigenous families to be successful and gain confidence in their ability to maintain a healthy family.

Referrals to the program are received from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and self-referrals through Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS).

The program supports Urban Indigenous families who are involved with MCFD and have, or may be at risk of having their child (ren) removed. The Family support workers attend MCFD intake meetings, Family court, family group conferences, and legal mediations.

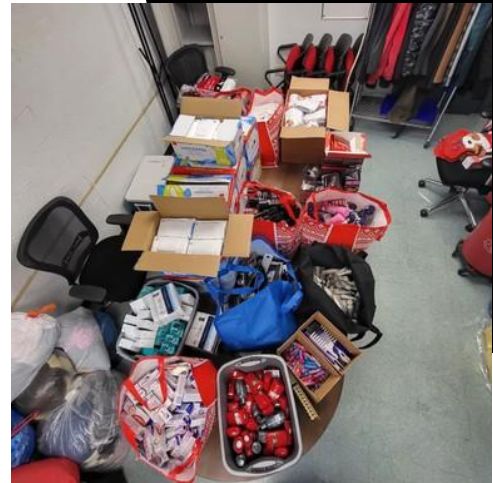
They also provide emotional support, transportation, in-house referrals, community support referrals, client follow-up, and support at MCFD meetings.

Parents are guided and supported by the Family support Worker to understand and follow through with court conditions and MCFD requirements in order to reach a goal of family reunification.



HIGHLIGHTS

Provided service to under 100 clients
Hosted a number of family nights.
Programming for families involved with CAPC
Groups/AIDP Programs
Provided access to medical and court support
virtually/phone
Had creative and adaptive change re-training
via online zoom trainings; Mandt training,
which reduces workplace violence & issued
certifications



TEAM COLLABORATIONS

- KFS Outreach: advocating housing needs, providing transportation for rental viewings and rental supplements, Aboriginal Infant development program, Aboriginal supported development Okanagan Nation Alliance, Family decision-making circles.
- Food Bank: providing families with means of transport from community foodbank.
- Family court: assisting with obtaining and providing direction for legal services
- Bridging the relationship with MCFD and seeing Bill C-92 act used more often which is positive.
- Additionally, the program provides assistance and guidance for networking in support of clients to obtain other mental health, legal or social services professionals.
- Consulting on behalf of clients' needs are being adequately met. Also, educating clients on a variety of relevant mental health and social service related topics such as online training courses that provide education on parenting, parent-child interaction, discipline, job skills, child development, /or prenatal care; as well as providing educational services one-on-one, family, or group basis is an important component of the program.



LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It provides basic and intermediate language training for adult and student newcomers to Canada.

Through additional funding from the BC Provincial Government (through a subcontract with KCR Community Resources), we are also able to offer classes to naturalised Canadians, refugee claimants, Provincial Nominees and temporary foreign workers.

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society is unique in Canada as the only Indigenous organisation providing immigrant services. Between April 2023 to March 31, 2024, KFS hosted 200 language assessments and had 233 students attend our classes. We have multicultural classes, with students coming from many different countries.

How the program works:

The Friendship Centre operates classes at eight levels. The curriculum is designed to help immigrants settle into Canada. There were two classes for each LINC level or multi-level. Courses were offered daily, with morning and afternoon session times.

What do participants learn?

The LINC classes help students speak and understand English in their day-to-day lives.

Participants learn employment skills, about Canadian life and Indigenous culture, Canadian laws, health care while also obtaining the language requirements for citizenship.

The goal is to assist the students with obtaining housing, employment and to successfully do common errands like shop or bank.

How does this program enrich the lives of participants?

Students not only learn about language but they also get a sense of community through the courses and also get to meet other newcomers and make connections.

As part of the schedule participants get to go into the community on field trips and they also enjoy a variety of special guest speakers. All of these components are designed to engage students in real world learning.

Global Reach

Students participate in this pilot project from around the world. Countries most represented from students in the courses included:

- ♦ Syria
- ♦ Ukraine
- ♦ Afghanistan
- ♦ Columbia
- ♦ Iran
- ♦ Sudan
- ♦ China
- ♦ Turkey
- ♦ El Salvador
- ♦ Eritrea



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SOCIETY PROGRAMMING

Reaching Home: A Project Funded by Housing Infrastructure Canada HICC

This major project is focused on several pillars:

- Economic Integration
- Housing Placements
- Prevention and Diversion Services
- Social and Community Integration

Coordinated Data Access Program

This is an initiative supported by the Government of Canada to better help those who need shelter and housing to connect to the available beds/services in their area.

This program lets our teams have the ability to partner with multiple organisations and build partnerships with the City of Kelowna among other government agencies. Through this program we are able to share data to assist individuals and families with housing supports and shelter programs in real time.

Our efforts are collaborative with this project and we hope to be launching the effort in its full capacity in 2024/2025. This project is also in conjunction with the Central Okanagan Foundation (COF) and the Homeless Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS).

Equity Food Program

This program is in association with the Central Okanagan Community Food Bank Society Partnership.

Our teams work closely with the Okanagan Food Bank to provide support to over 11,034 families annually. This works out to be somewhere around 400 individuals each month. This close collaboration has remained vital to ensuring that people's basic necessities can be met.



Okanagan Regional Library Indigenous Peer Navigation

This is a free service for our community members.

The Peer navigation program has a Indigenous focus and the goals of the program are towards assisting our population with respect to addressing their barriers to accessing servicing related to their housing needs, and medical necessities through professional referrals.

The team has had over 120 appointments per week in the last year and the program staff work in close collaboration with Library staff and the KNS Employment Team.



People Lived Experience Society (Xast Wil'tn), Program Enhancement

This program focuses on indigenous individuals that have experienced incarceration or addiction. We are pleased to share that through this program we have hired a new Trauma Counsellor.

With our Housing support program, we currently have 16 units which offer housing for 3-6 months based on the individual's needs which hopes to assist the person to find housing and overcome barriers to reintegration.

We are also hosting a Healing circle program, which works closed with the people with lived experiences.



KFS OUTREACH SERVICES

This program has a “No one is turned away” approach. The focus is on providing basic necessities to those in need and providing basic necessities such as supplying underwear, socks, clothing, and hygiene products for our community members.

We also work closely with the Housing Support Program which is intended to provide rent subsidy and housing placement support and help those who need it the most to find safe housing.



OUTREACH FACTS & STATS

The KFS street team consists of 8 dedicated team members.

- We work collaboratively with a focus on community safety and connectivity.
- We recently acquired a new Outreach vehicle to help teams be more effective with boots on the ground efforts.
- We interact with people and help them with their basic needs which includes medical triage.
- We work closely with the Aboriginal Metis Housing Association.
- We also work with the Central Okanagan Foundation and the City of Kelowna for the Point In Time Count.
- Our teams support the Hamper Program.



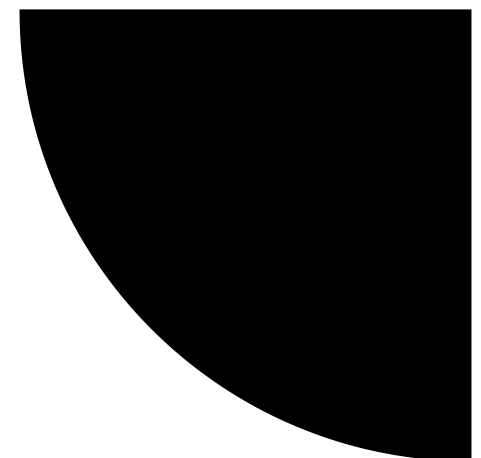
EVENTS

In the 2023/2024 season, our team's creativity reached new heights, thanks to the unwavering support of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and community partners.

We celebrated remarkable milestones, including the Turtle Island Festival, which drew over 2,000 attendees, and the largest-ever Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls March with more than 500 participants.

Our initiatives, such as the Feed the People program, provided hundreds of dinners to the unhoused, while our Truth and Reconciliation march also saw significant participation. Collaborations with organizations like S.H.A.R.E., CRIS Adaptive, and the City of Kelowna enhanced our community impact.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our funders and sponsors for enabling a diverse range of events, from monthly Family Nights to seasonal markets and ongoing workshops, fostering community connection and support.



KI-LOW-NA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY PRESENTS

SISTERS IN SPIRIT

Friday
October 4
5 PM - 7 PM

Wear Red
Bring A Drum

REMEMBERING OUR STOLEN SISTERS
MARCH & VIGIL

442 LEON AVENUE
KELOWNA, BC
250-763-4905

SOUP & BARNACK
WILL BE SERVED

Contact: Mailyn.T@kfs.bc.ca for more info

50th Anniversary Logo

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Turtle Island Festival had an attendance of over 2,000 people.

The Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls March which had its largest attendance to date with over 500 participants.

Feed the People where our staff handed out a couple hundred dinners for the unhoused.

- ♦ Our Truth and Reconciliation march where the attendance remained in the hundreds.
- ♦ Community Partner Collaborations: S.H.A.R.E, CRIS Adaptive, Urban Matters, City of Kelowna, Metro, Tourism Kelowna, and PEOPLE employment services

“Our Turtle Island Festival is a good day and opportunity for us to share our culture and those pieces with anyone who wants to come and be a part of it, learn and grow, and be part of that truth and reconciliation,” said Christina Verhagen, president of the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society.

TURTLE ISLAND FESTIVAL CELEBRATES NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY IN KELOWNA — CASTANET.NET



MMIW PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY:
Aaron Hemens (he/him),
Reporter/Storyteller, Settler
of Filipino-European ancestry
on unceded syilx homelands

ELDERS

Our society has the privilege to connect with an average of 70 Elders each year.

Programming At A Glance

- One-on-one personalised support through a variety of means including companionship, transportation to appointments and connecting our Elders to relevant resources for their individual needs.
- Monthly Elders Council meetings held on the first Friday of the month and the Elders Lunches which are held on the third Thursday of the month.
- Weekly activities including, karaoke, crib, bingo, painting, walks, coffees and craft activities at the Share organization.
- Event calendar of workshops, special events, engagement opportunities.

Youth Engagement

We aim to connect our Elders with the community and especially youth.

We have had a few different activities involving youth from Rutland Middle School that focused on sharing stories and included fun activities like decorating cookies.

Our Elders have many gifts, and we like to support them in sharing their talents and ways with youth. We are excited to expand this effort and we are gearing up for future events like this focused on drum making, beading or making Bannock.

Fundraising

We have had several fundraisers this year, including Bannock tacos lunch, that have been very successful, with attendance and engagement, events like these combined with the generous support of our donors have enabled our team to do some larger fun events this year such as a kayaking day/picnic and a bike riding day/ picnic with the CRIS society.



Photo features the Bannock fundraiser for the Elders.

Information Sessions + Workshops

Our Elders continue to learn in our workshop offerings. We have great attendance for the events that we have hosted.

Topics we thought were relevant to our Elders this past year included Emergency Preparedness for Seniors, Advance Care Planning, a Technology Clinic, information sessions on scams and efforts around health education related to variety of the more common health ailments that Elders can typically be susceptible, too.

Personalized Support

Wherever possible we work one-on-one with our Elders to help understand and meet their individual needs. In addition to the many varied group events we pride ourselves to be able to offer personalised support for our Elders as needs are identified. If our Elders are in the hospital or at home and connect with our team, we help how we can.

The level of support depends on the person and their needs and can sometimes look like providing transportation on occasion, helping with paperwork or even just a visit if they need companionship.

Cultural Connections

We also coordinate various requests from different community entities for our Elders to provide a welcome or a prayer or share teachings and wisdom for various community events.

We are happy to have facilitated and connected those agencies with quite a few of our Elders who have been more than happy to share their teachings and to be honoured with appropriate honorariums for their most valuable contributions to the community.

Recreation + Sport

We value being able to help our Elders engage in programming that is specific to their physical health. These events enrich their lives and help them to get out and get active in nature through various outdoors activities.

We try to diversify our offerings each year and in 2024, Elders got social and active in many exciting ways including: Tai Chi, walks in the community, picnics in the park, trying out water sports like kayaking and paddle boarding as well as adaptive cycling our Elders enjoyed our recreation.

Special Events

Sometimes we like to set aside some resources for some really memorable events. Our Elders deserve to be celebrated and this summer we honoured them and hosted a number of special events including a dinner cruise on Okanagan Lake, a train ride in Summerland and a nice lunch at Kekuli Café in Westbank. A great time was had by all who attended our summer special events.

THANK YOU

We could not have achieved our successes without the help and support of our dedicated staff, volunteers and community partners.

Thank you to our funders and sponsors for their support in helping us to host the following events:

- Family Nights (Jan-April / Sept-Dec)
- Staff Pro D Days (Monthly)
- ♦ Elders Luncheons (Every third Thursday of the Month)
- ♦ Volunteer Fair/Job Fairs (Seasonal)
- ♦ Community/Staff Workshops (Ongoing and as needed)
- ♦ Elders Fundraisers (Ongoing sales of merchandise and bannock tacos)
- ♦ Back to School Backpack Fundraiser (August/September 2024)
- ♦ Elders Collaboration Events (In conjunction with: SHARE Society, CRIS adaptive services, Metro, etc.)
- ♦ Turtle Island Festival (June 21, 2024)
- ♦ Truth and Reconciliation (September 30, 2024)
- ♦ Sisters in Spirit (October 4th)
- ♦ MMIW2S March (May 5th)
- ♦ Blanket Ceremonies (Ongoing)
- ♦ Medicine/Tobacco Picking (Seasonal)
- ♦ Feed the People (December)
- ♦ Christmas Parties (Children, Elders, and Staff)
- ♦ Markets (Fall Market, Christmas Market, New Years Market)
- ♦ Community Dinners (The CMHC project, mural project, partner appreciation dinner)
- ♦ Indigenous Veterans Day (November 8, 2024)
- ♦ Drum Making Workshops (Ongoing)

