



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



About the Cover Page Illustration

Figures rejoice around a vibrant heart, adorned with imagery from the VACFSS logo. Backdropped on a geometric pattern inspired by traditional Coast Salish weaving, the blue beacon symbolizes the “heart” work we, as an agency, conduct every day. By leading with our hearts, and with the support of our community depicted as the encircled figures, this cover serves as a testament to VACFSS’s unwavering commitment to protecting and honouring the families, children, and youth we serve.



VACFSS acknowledges, with deep respect and gratitude, that our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the hə́nqə́míhə́n -speaking Musqueam Peoples, the Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətaʔ/ Sellwítulh (Tseil-Waututh) Nations. We recognize the past, present, and future generations of the Coast Salish Peoples who help us steward this land, as well as honour and celebrate this place.

VACFSS ANNUAL REPORT



VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Our Children, Our Future, Our Responsibility

APRIL 1, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2024

IN REMEMBRANCE OF PERRY OMEASOO



It is with a heavy heart that we share the passing of dedicated Director and friend Perry Omeasoo earlier this year. Please join us in reflecting on the immense contributions Perry made to VACFSS and our community.

Perry's dedication and compassion as a VACFSS Board Member and community leader in the Downtown Eastside exemplified his profound commitment to supporting others. With over three decades of service as a health care support worker in addictions, Perry touched countless lives with his kindness and generosity. His renowned cooking show on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and his homemade baked goods distributed to those in need, were just a glimpse of his boundless spirit of giving. Perry's infectious smile and unwavering enthusiasm, best seen during his role as Santa at the VACFSS Winter Solstice Ceremony, brought joy to all who knew him.

As friends of Perry, we were privileged to witness his immense heart, his resilience, and his deep-rooted love for his family, friends, and Nation. Perry's legacy of promoting Indigenous identity as a pathway to healing from trauma will continue to inspire us all. We are honored to have known him as a friend and leader, and his presence is deeply missed.





OUR LOGO

Laurence Wilson, from the Nisga's Nation, designed the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society logo in 1993. The translation for the logo is "Human and Wolf Child." As the wolf represents family, this is a perfect symbol for our Agency, which has been established to strengthen Indigenous families. Laurence Wilson was born in 1954 in Nass River, an area located near the North Coast of British Columbia. Laurence apprenticed under Norman Tait, a highly regarded West Coast artist, for three years and attended the prestigious Indigenous art school, 'Ksan, from the beginning of 1978 to the end of 1979. He prefers to use such mediums as wood, canvas and hide in order to produce original paintings, drums and two dimensional carvings. With his extensive background in design and form informed by his culture, Laurence Wilson has become one of the many prominent Indigenous artists in British Columbia.

OUR MISSION, OUR VISION

Our Mission Statement

Provide holistic service delivery that culturally and spiritually strengthens Aboriginal children and families.

Our Vision Statement

A balanced and harmonious Aboriginal community.

Our Policy Statement

An Aboriginal perspective will be acknowledged, respected, and legitimized through policy. An Aboriginal presence of knowledge and thinking will be reflected throughout VACFSS programs, policies, and practice.

Our Philosophy of Service Delivery

We ensure that the rights, safety, well-being and spirit of Aboriginal children and families are upheld, honoured, and protected. We strive to eliminate oppression, discrimination, and marginalization within our community. We acknowledge and honour the inherent wisdom, capacity and resourcefulness of our community in designing programs and services to care for our own children and families. Accordingly, we are dedicated to planning, developing, and implementing creative and innovative Aboriginal programs and services in collaboration with members of our community and other agencies.

OUR VALUES

Humility

Humility is putting others first by giving up what you think you deserve; Mother Earth for she provides our every need and loves us even when we do not listen to her; a newborn baby coming into this world with nothing but their small presence asking only to be loved and cared for; recognizing what we give in our lives and being thankful for each new day.

Strength-Based Practice

VACFSS incorporates a strength-based approach to service delivery. We believe in empowering people to trust that they have both the capacity and mastery to take responsibility for their own healing. By carrying the teachings of our ancestors and incorporating Aboriginal cultural customs within our social work practice, we can facilitate healing opportunities and share in the successes of Aboriginal children, families and the community that are involved with VACFSS.

Respect

Respect flows freely from the Creator to and through everyone and everything without judgment, from the tiniest child to the oldest Elder. It is the basic law of life that allows feeling and showing honoured for all the creator's creations; all cultures, all ways and all paths to the creator which keeps the circle flowing in a good way.

Integrity

Integrity is doing the right thing even when nobody's watching.

Belonging

Belonging is creating authentic connections that encourages healthy and caring relationships with our children, families and community.



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board of Directors as of March 31st, 2024

Chair

Linda Stiller

Co-Chair

Madeleine MacIvor

Treasurer/Secretary

Richard George

Director

Virge Silveira

Director

Perry Omeasoo*

Director

Darlene Willier

Director

Bernice Albert

Director

Aaron Christoff

Director

Andres (Lix) Lopez



*In remembrance of Perry Omeasoo - Page 3





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Another eventful year has passed, and I am pleased to, once again, report on our programs and services.

One of our major accomplishments includes the completion of our Operational Review as part of our ongoing strategic planning and risk mitigation oversight. We retained a consultant who completed the report in the Spring of 2023. As part of the review, the consultant interviewed 49 staff, and reviewed many key documents, previous reviews and policies. He presented the findings to the staff and made recommendations in areas such as succession planning, leadership challenges, workload and staffing, culture and identity, internal communications, and administrative processes.

I was particularly pleased to see that, between the interviews and the completion of the final report, our CEO had already proactively implemented many of the recommendations. While the review made several recommendations for improvement, the challenges are not unique to VACFSS. Like many organizations, we experienced aftereffects from the pandemic including feelings of disconnection. Specifically, the review highlighted the importance and value of culture and Indigenous identity for our clients and staff. Our ongoing strategic plan reflects this direction as we resume and expand our cultural programming, ensure that our children remain proud of their heritage, and prioritize filling vacant client-support Elder positions.

A turning point this year was the Judicial Review that overturned the BC Human Rights Tribunal decision. It is difficult to navigate the colonial structures that have created an adversarial, complex and daunting child welfare system. I am proud to stand behind and support our social workers, who conduct themselves with respect, integrity, and professionalism. We are thankful for Judge Gomery's decision that ensured the best interests of the children remain at the centre of all decision-making.

This past year also brought immense sadness as we mourned the passing of Perry Omeasoo, who served on our board since 2016. He was an incredible contributor, as a community leader and healer, with lived experience and cultural grounding. He generously shared his wisdom and time at VACFSS meetings and events. He was loved by his family, friends, community, and staff and management at VACFSS, and will be dearly missed. Thank you, Perry, for making the world a better place.

Thank you everyone for your support and continued dedication to our children and families.

All my Relations,

Linda Stiller 🙏





MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

It is my honour to have led VACFSS through another year of service to children and families in Vancouver's Indigenous community, and to present the management reports and program tracking to you for the 2023/2024 fiscal year. Our theme this year is celebrating the "heart" work of our community that includes foremost our social workers and our partners. This year we have focused on three major points that relate back to this theme of "heart" work.

 First and foremost, we have made much progress post-pandemic. I recognize the toll the pandemic had on everyone and, in particular, the dedicated service workers supporting our children, youth and families during the dual health emergencies of the pandemic and toxic drug supply. Recognizing that we are in a constant state of response, VACFSS introduced support for staff in the form of workshops, wellness and retention incentives, resumed in-person gatherings, and one-to-one support for those impacted by a client death due to the toxic drug supply. To address the need for self care and support, we introduced a series of workshops titled "Living with Hope and Clearing", critical incident debriefing, and resumed in person annual events. In response to the need to promote and maintain a positive and supportive work environment, leadership training was introduced focusing on the VACFSS values, Indigenous core cultural competencies, collaborative practice, respectful communication, managing intense emotions, and restorative supervision.

 Secondly, as mentioned above, we recognize the deep and painful losses in our communities as a result of toxic drugs. Our services will continue to plan and provide for children, youth, and families impacted by drug poisoning, with our focus on collaborative practice and gathering the circle for the children and youth impacted by the loss of a parent. The loss of a parent or primary caregiver has left multiple children requiring long term placement planning with extended family and their member communities. We continue to strengthen our engagement with communities across Canada under An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. Children requiring alternate care are primarily placed in Out of Care Options with extended family versus bringing them into care.

 Thirdly, the Judicial Review decision by Justice Gomery in the Supreme Court of BC regarding the matter of VACFSS v RR underscores the vital role of the social worker within the context of child welfare legislation. We believe Justice Gomery's decision upholds VACFSS' duty and commitment to place children's safety at the centre of all we do, while also recognizing the continued need to engage parents on a healing path that mitigates the adversity and personal challenges they face. VACFSS is committed to the vision of its Indigenous urban founders who recognized the need for VACFSS. We continue our engagement and collaboration with Nations across Canada who are reclaiming the traditional practice of placing children at the centre. We have successfully established our interventions within the sections of the Child, Family and Community Service Act that supports restorative practice and least disruptive options. VACFSS will continue to uphold this practice with defined policies and community/Nation engagement.

I want to end my report commending the achievements and outcomes outlined in the management reports. VACFSS is fortunate to have outstanding and dedicated staff. Our practice is strengthened by the staff who continue their life's work at VACFSS, with some who have already celebrated 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of service to the community. Our endurance is anchored to the hopes and dreams of the children, youth and families we support. We also feel supported by our partners, including caregivers, Nations, other community-based agencies, and our MCFD Service Delivery Area. It is this commitment to service that strengthens our resolve to practice within very challenging times.

Finally, I raise my hands to the dedicated Board of Directors at VACFSS. They understand, support, and lift up the complex and difficult work we do. Thank you.

All my Relations,

Bernadette Spence 🙏





HUMAN RESOURCES

Jeremy Bara

Mandate

The mandate of the Human Resources (HR) Department is to develop and administer programs in the areas of Recruitment, Selection, Training, Staff Development, Performance Management, Labour Relations, Compensation Management, Records Management, Information Management, Occupational Safety and Health, Wellness, Benefits Administration, HR Policies & Procedures, and Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies.

A. Staffing

In 2023/2024, 164 employees were employed, including 26 casual employees and one seconded staff person. To reflect the demographics of the people we support, 61% percent of Team Leaders/ Supervisors and 58% of Managers and 48% of VACFSS staff members were of Indigenous ancestry.

Our active recruitment efforts saw 469 applications to VACFSS resulting in 25 new regular employees hired. Eight or 32% percent of new hires were of Indigenous ancestry. There were also 16 internal selections.

The turnover rate for 2023/24 was higher than average at 21.9% compared to the previous year at 13.8%. The five-year average turnover rate is 17.6%. The ten-year average turnover rate for VACFSS is 15.8%.

B. Education & Training

The agency provided several routine training initiatives over the year. Delegation training remained a priority for new hires where five social workers virtually attended Indigenous Perspectives Society. Throughout the year, VACFSS conducted two comprehensive New Employee Orientations

VACFSS team members are all smiles as they facilitate the Caregiver Culture Camp, an annual initiative that connects caregivers and children in care to Indigenous practices. Events and services such as this camp are all crucial parts of VACFSS's restorative service model.





Supervision Model and Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies frameworks, this training provides a solid foundation for new, emerging, and existing leaders to effectively navigate complex challenges and foster collaborative relationships across the organization.

The agency is deeply committed to restorative child welfare practice, policy, community healing, operational development, jurisdictional pathways, research and learning opportunities for staff. VACFSS supported several staff from programs to attend the 2nd Annual Our Children Our Way Conference held in Vancouver in October 2023. The conference provided an opportunity for staff to strengthen their networks and enhance their understanding of effective approaches to supporting Indigenous children, youth, and families whom they serve.

C. Labour Relations

Throughout the year, VACFSS continued to work collaboratively with BC General Employees' Union (BCGEU) and implemented the applicable changes of the Indigenous Services Collective Agreement effective April 1, 2023. Labour Management Committee meetings resumed during the year and are held bi-monthly.

D. Occupational Safety & Health (OSH)

Maintaining a safe and healthy work environment is a top priority for VACFSS, with our OSH Program covering three operational work locations. The Program is comprehensive and includes: joint occupational safety and health committee members, emergency personnel, risk assessment teams, first aid attendants, and ergonomic assessors.

Over the past year, VACFSS maintained several measures to promote health and safety, including providing comprehensive health and safety orientations for new employees. Monthly training meetings were held at each location, and all three

attended by 18 staff and co-op students to ensure that our new employees received the necessary information and resources to succeed in their roles. Following New Employee Orientations, our CEO personally led training sessions on Indigenous Core Cultural Competencies. These sessions are crucial for all employees to deepen their understanding and appreciation of VACFSS' specific Indigenous competencies, fostering a more inclusive and respectful work environment while grounding their work in the agency. Privacy training was, as always, required for all new hires and practicum students.

VACFSS launched the pilot of a new Collaborative Leadership Training Program starting with two cohorts (approximately 40 staff), developed in partnership with the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC). This program, instructed by JIBC facilitators, is designed to reflect the core values and culture of our agency while aligning with our Vision, Mission, and Values. Drawing from the Restorative

sites met quarterly to review health and safety policies, procedures, current incidents, and issues brought forward by staff. Ergonomic assessments are conducted to identify and address any potential workplace hazards and ensure the physical well-being of our employees.

COVID-19 and their variants continue to impact staff; however, not to the degree during the height of pandemic. A robust communicable disease prevention plan remains implemented and continues to be followed to mitigate COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

Wellness: Living a Health Aboriginal Lifestyle (LAHAL)

VACFSS is committed to the holistic health, wellness, and wellbeing of our employees. We recognize the challenges our helpers face while providing support to children, youth, families, and caregivers. To balance the work, wellness options are made available under our Living a Healthy Aboriginal Lifestyle (LAHAL) program.

In the past year, we offered a variety of annual wellness initiatives including massage for stress reduction. To encourage physical activity and camaraderie, staff were encouraged to join the agency's team and participate in the Sun Run. Amethyst BioMats were made available at all three sites, offering stress reduction and therapeutic benefits to our employees. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) continued to provide peer support to workers who experience critical incidents in the work, and one-to-one staff support is available for critical incidents that require additional care.

The agency organized and introduced four two-day workshops "Living with Hope and Clearing | Working with Complex Trauma." These workshops were the first in a series and provided valuable insights into trauma's impact on Indigenous families and offered strategies for resilience and growth.

A primary support to all VACFSS staff under the LAHAL Program is the Cultural Clinical Counselor, Elder. The Elder continued to provide support, wellness, and healing in all aspects of the work directly supporting employees across all three VACFSS worksites and virtually. 206 one-to-one counselling sessions, seven CISM circles, and ten other events where grounding and support were provided to staff. The Elder is also available to provide consultation and participate in larger discussions around cultural training or activity planned by a program, department, and the agency including grounding, brushing, prayers, and smudging. The work of the Elder continued to be well received by staff in all programs. The Elder also continued to provide support to workers in developing and maintaining coping strategies in response to the opioid crisis.

Throughout the year, VACFSS organized various events to foster community, celebrate culture, and promote awareness. Our staff took part in numerous teambuilding events including the 2023 Staff Update Meeting at the Musqueam Cultural Centre, our Annual Staff Barbecue, and the Agency Operational Review Findings sessions. The annual Burning Ceremony at Musqueam and Sage Picking with the Conayt Friendship Society in Merritt were two of several cultural ceremonies that promoted healing, reflection, and spiritual reconnection. We engaged with our community by hosting events that align with significant days of recognition, including the annual Moosehide Campaign, a gathering in solidarity with the National Day of Awareness for MMIWG2S+, the celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day, and in observance of National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. 🙌



This year, VACFSS attended the 33rd annual Women's Memorial March. The march provides a space to honour and remember women, girls, and LGBTQ2S individuals lost to violence, abuse, poverty and systemic racism. Organized by women, this march emphasizes the experiences of Indigenous women, girls, and 2S+ individuals who face disproportionate levels of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual violence on a daily basis.





CHILD SAFETY

Nazeem Ratanshi

Program Overview

This year, we continued to see enhancements in key practice and operational areas, including expansion of our collaborative practice team, increased involvement in planning for children and families with their respective Nations under An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (the Federal Legislation), and placement of children with Kith and Kin under the Out-of-Care Options program.

We expanded our Collaborative Practice Team by adding a Lifelong Cultural Connections Worker and a Team Leader for the Out-of-Care Options team. These new roles ensure we maintain high compliance with restorative policies and standards, and they are crucial in our mission to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care by placing them with extended family or community members. This growth aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action to reduce the number of Indigenous children in care by utilizing family and extended family placement and community options to ensure placement priority requirements under the Federal Legislation. Our efforts to place children with Kith and Kin under the Out-of-Care Options Program have ensured our children remain connected to their families and communities. This approach supports the cultural identity and overall well-being of our children, fostering a sense of belonging and stability.

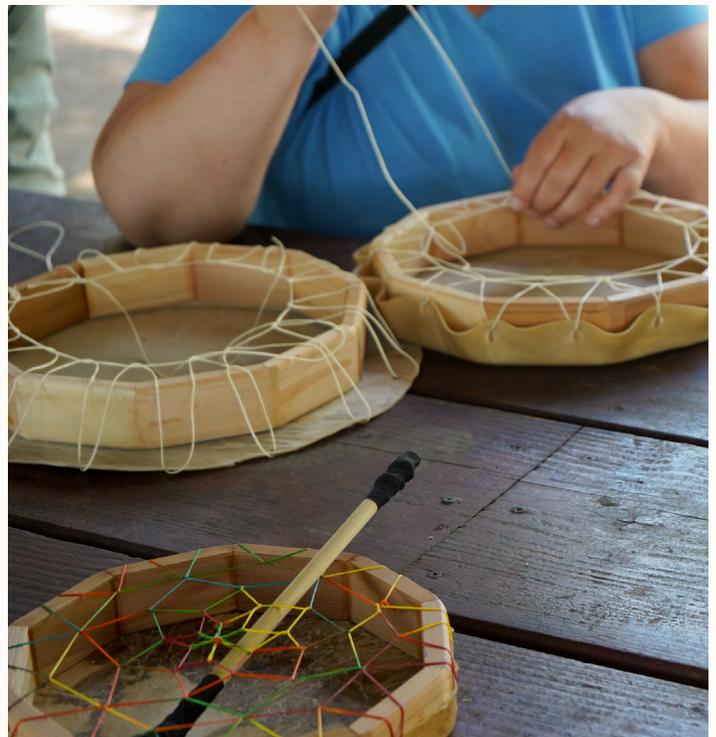
About the Program

VACFSS Child Safety (CS) Program is guided by Restorative Child Welfare Policy & Practice that is informed by the experiences, worldviews, and cultures of the Indigenous families being served. It is framed within an awareness of and engagement with colonial history and departs from the approaches of

mainstream social work in favour of strengths-based, graduated, and supportive client engagement. Using our Restorative Child Welfare Policy & Practice results in measurable positive change for the families we serve.

The Child Safety (CS) Program is responsible for receiving, assessing, and investigating alleged reports of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children. Most commonly, reports are assessed using a Family Development Response (FDR) model focusing on collaborating with families to address safety concerns in the best interest of their children.

In situations where children are determined to be at risk, CS prioritizes the least intrusive measures and kinship placement options to keep children safe. Ongoing access to the parent within the VACFSS Access Policy is fundamental in keeping children connected. The overall goal of the CS Program is to gather a strong circle of support and to facilitate pathways to healing. These pathways



begin with worker engagement, practical support, collaborative practice, concrete resources, and cultural connections.

Program Highlights & Initiatives

The primary strategic initiative for the Child Safety Program this year was to enhance Restorative Child Welfare service delivery across the program. VACFSS Access Practice Directive is a program-wide strategic initiative that, using comprehensive data collection and analysis to optimize resource allocation, ensures high compliance with restorative policy, standards, and legislation. Summer Students facilitated transportation for children in care to have access to their family.

Within the context of Inclusive Foster Care and trauma-informed practice, every child in care has a right to access safe connections to their parent(s), family, community(ies) and culture(s). Supporting this right is a Restorative Child Welfare practice.

Data: Profile of Reports Received

Description

The Child Safety Program yearly activity reports arise from two main sources: reports received and ongoing case file management. This section focuses on the reports received during this past fiscal year. Child safety reports take place when new reports are received identifying children at possible risk of harm without intervention. Reports for support services are coded as Service Requests (SR), while reports of suspected maltreatment of children are coded as Incidents.

A Family Development Response (FDR) allows for the intake team to provide services over a longer period of 90 days, as opposed to 30 days, through a restorative practice approach in which families are working in collaboration with social workers, their Nations, Kith and Kin, and other service providers.

Fiscal Year Data

During this past reporting period, 88% (223) of the incidents received were assessed as FDR and 12% (30) were coded as Investigation (INV). Furthermore, 84 reports received were about families in need of support services and coded as a Service Request (SR). There were a total of 356 incidents and 84 service requests for a total of 440 reports received in this reporting period. Further, there were 3,050 After Hours memos received outside of agency operational hours that either produced new reports or provided information on situations occurring on open files. The number of incidents continues to reduce each year, while the number of families in need of support services increased this year. There was a significant increase in the number of After Hours reports received this year.

The CS Program uses Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) as a guide for child welfare incident reporting and assessment. Neglect and the potential for physical harm due to domestic violence are the largest categories of maltreatment recorded in the 253 incidents opened this past fiscal period; neglect was recorded 183 times and physical abuse (specifically, the potential for physical harm within the context of domestic violence), which was recorded 118 times. Emotional harm was recorded in 13 incidents and sexual abuse, or exploitation, was noted in three incidents. There

Report Outcomes	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of Incidents	525 - 364 opened during the fiscal year - 296 already open	525 - 364 opened during the fiscal year - 296 already open	482 - 290 opened during the fiscal year - 192 already open	404 - 280 opened during the fiscal year - 124 already open	385 - 319 opened during the fiscal year - 66 already open	356 - 253 opened during the fiscal year - 103 already open
Service Requests	116	116	103	112	72	84



Resource Society, Warriors Against Violence, Aboriginal Infant Development, Sheway, Responsive Interdisciplinary Child Community Health Education and Research (RICHER), and various other agencies that support Indigenous families through culturally responsive approaches.

Section 13: Category of Maltreatment

In the computer database, the category of physical abuse includes physical harm reported about a child’s safety, as well as the likelihood of physical harm due to family violence or neglect. The data was set out to show how many instances of physical harm were reported, as opposed to the likelihood of physical harm due to domestic violence or neglect.

This data reveals that of the incidents coded where physical harm was reported: 22% were due to reports of children being at risk of physical harm, 34% were due to concerns of family violence, and 56% were due to reports of the likelihood of physical harm due to neglect.

A month-to-month comparison of incidents received during this period shows higher reporting during the months of October, June, and July. A further breakdown of the incidents shows the following categories of reporter by type:

Reporter	Total	Percentage
Police	69	27%
Community Professional	59	23%
Concerned Citizen	46	18%
Health Professional	32	13%
School/Daycare	23	9%
Parents/Family	18	7%
Child/Youth	6	2%

Data: Staffing & Caseload Review

As of March 31, 2024, there were a total of 409 open files, 227 of which were Family Service (FS) files; there were 124 children in care (CS) and 136 children in the custody of another person under Sections 35.2d

were 12 incidents recorded as “other” with Section 13 concerns of the child being absent from the home and in danger or the child’s primary parent passing away, including the loss of a parent due to the toxic drug crisis. Note that an incident can have more than one Section 13 concern.

Neglect can occur as a result of poverty, socio-economic hardships, and parental health challenges. Homelessness and lack of affordable housing in Vancouver is a crisis that has been rapidly accelerating over the last decade and disproportionately impacts Indigenous families. Our families experience a disproportionate burden of ill health due to inequitable access to health care services and barriers to being able to follow through with their medical needs. Neglect can be intensified by the lack of available adequate supervision or care by an appropriate caregiver or having children exposed to traumatic situations such as witnessing violence, including family violence.

To address some of these concerns, the CS Program provides financial and housing support to families. Additionally, CS will connect families with various Family Preservation and Reunification (FPR) services, concrete needs, assisting families access mental health, and special needs services. CS may also provide referrals to our community partners including Aboriginal Mothers Centre, Atira Women’s

Section 13 Concerns	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Neglect	255	210	206	208	237	183
Likelihood of Physical Harm	174	140	139	123	134	118

or 41.1b and Extended Family Program (EFP) (Out of Care Options and S. 54.01 permanent transfer of custody). The 227 open FS files this reporting period represents a total of 960 persons served: 489 adults and 471 children. This is a decrease of 87 persons served from the last reporting period.

Out-of-Care Options Homes

Out-of-Care Options (OOCO) files are designated for children who are placed with Kith and Kin as an alternative to foster care. These children are placed in the care of extended family members or community members whom they have a significant relationship with. OOCO is a option that is a less disruptive alternative to foster care and includes the Extended Family Plan (Section 8 Agreements), Temporary Transfer of Custody under Section 35 (2) (d) and 41 (1) (b), and Permanent Transfer of Custody under Section 54.01 of the CFCSA.

For the current reporting period, there were 136 children receiving services under the OOCO program. Of the 136 children, 37 are placed under the provision of Kith and Kin or Extended Family Program (previously known as Child in Home of Relative Program or CIHR), 25 are placed in an interim transfer of custody of another person under Section 35(2)(d) or 41(1)(b), and 74 are placed in a permanent transfer of custody before a Continuing Custody Order (CCO), under Section 54.01.

The high number of children (136) placed with their families (EFP, child in custody of another person, and permanent transfer of custody) continues to exceed the total number of children in foster care. The use of less disruptive measures and Out-of-Care Options placements are projected to increase over bringing children into care with the director of Child Family and Community Services Act (CFCSA). To ensure a high commitment to restorative practice,

during this reporting period a Team Leader to our OOCO program was approved in anticipation of the increase of less disruptive options in planning for children.

Our OOCO program is an integral component in our effort to uphold the Calls to Action of the TRC commission and reduce the number of children in care by promoting the use of least intrusive measures in keeping children safe and utilizing alternatives to care. The use of alternatives to care continues to be a key priority for the Child Safety Program. Supporting kinship caregivers in their efforts to address the needs of children provides an opportunity to improve the lives of many children who have already experienced trauma and are at risk of entering the foster care system.

At present, there are a total of 103 caregiver homes consisting of 45 homes located throughout the province where children are being cared for by their extended family or community members under an OOCO placement. There are an additional 58 homes where children are placed with their family and community members under a permanent transfer of custody, s. 54.01 placement. Due to geographical distances to these homes, support is sought through joint case management with other delegated Indigenous agencies and/or MCFD.

Children In Care

As of March 31, 2024, there were 124 children in care consisting of 24 Voluntary Care Agreements, 82 Temporary Custody Orders, eight Interim Orders, six removals, and four Continuing Custody Orders. As of March 31, 2024, there were four children under a CCO status who are transferred to the Guardianship program. With the use of OOCO, it is anticipated that the file transfer rate to Guardianship will remain lower as more children are having long-term placements

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Children in Care	116	131	130	138	165	141	117	93	107	124
Removals	94	114	87	87	89	68	56	54	66	42

with extended family or community, including transfer of custody, before a CCO under s. 54.01.

The aggregate number of removals for this reporting period is 42, which represents a continued decrease year-over-year in comparison to the previous nine reporting periods as highlighted in the table above.

Section 15 of An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families, SC 2019, c.24 (Federal Act) states that:

in the context of providing child and family services in relation to an Indigenous child, the Child Safety Program upholds the legislative requirement to the extent that it is consistent with the best interests of the child, the child must not be apprehended solely on the basis of his or her socio-economic conditions, including poverty, lack of adequate housing or infrastructure or the state of health of his or her parent or the care provider.

Collaborative Practice & Culture

The Collaborative Practice Team receives a large volume of referrals for facilitated meetings from the five Child Safety Teams. The CS Program prioritizes case conferences for child safety issues, including gathering the child’s circle and extended family placements for planning and reunification. There were 133 collaborative practice processes, including 11 Family Group Conferences held at court and 29 mediations facilitated by predominantly Indigenous mediators. These figures reflect completed collaborative practice meetings during this fiscal period in comparison to the last fiscal period noting

Collaborative Practice	2022	2023
Collaborative Practice Process (FCPC & FGC)	132	133
Mediations	33	29
Family Case Planning Conferences (Court)	9	11

the very high use of collaborative practice.

The Child Safety Program continues to offer cultural support to families served, as well as having access to an Elder on staff.

Program Achievements & Initiatives

- Continued growth in the use of Out-of-Care Options placements;
- Decrease in child removals and an overall decrease in number of children in care;
- Substantial utilization of Collaborative Practice Processes;
- Operational enhancement with the addition of an Out-of-Care Options Team Leader, Cultural Care Coordinator and Lifelong Connections Worker;
- Organizational restructuring to include a Director of Operations and Integrated Practice;
- Recruitment of social workers, social work assistants, and summer students;
- Supporting clinical practice through restorative staff supervision;
- Access Practice Directive and continuity of relationships for children in care to promote reunification; and
- Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreements with MCFD to ensure equitable access to all Ministry program areas for VACFSS staff and clients served.

Overall, our Child Safety Program is dedicated to creating a safe, supportive, and culturally grounded environment for children and families. Through collaborative practice, strategic initiatives, and a steadfast commitment to our community, we are making meaningful strides in ensuring the well-being and safety of the children in our care. 🙏

Roberta Pierro, our Family preservation & Reunification counsellor is learning to make a Moss Bag at one of our Moss Bag teachings workshop.





FAMILY PRESERVATION AND REUNIFICATION

Doris Peters

FPR Overview

The Family Preservation and Reunification (FPR) Program provides a continuum of homebased, culturally grounded, and goal-orientated services to families served by VACFSS' Child Safety, Guardianship and Resources Programs. These services prevent children from coming into care and promote lasting family reunification.

By standing with families, the Program engages them with service plans to address child safety concerns, strengthen cultural and community connections, and access essential resources such as housing, medical care, and food security. Staff focus on enhancing parenting confidence, improving relationships between parents and children in care, and increasing understanding of historical and intergenerational trauma to promote healing.

Families access the FPR Program through referrals from VACFSS' Child Safety, Guardianship, and Resource Programs. Family Preservation and Reunification Counsellors (FPCs) collaborate closely with families and referring workers to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals.

Common areas of concern that FPCs address include parent-child relationship, addictions, family violence, grief and loss, trauma, single-parenting challenges, family court involvement, concrete needs, racism, resource access, and children with special needs. Additionally, they support families dealing with physical and/or mental illness and stress management.

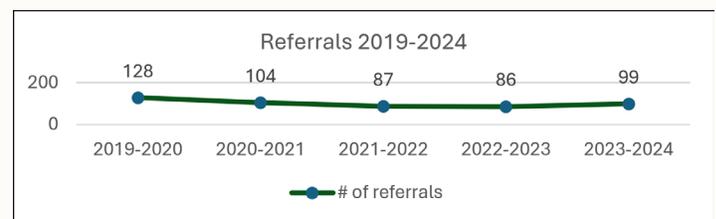
Staff in the FPR program walk alongside families

and offer support and guidance. FPC's develops knowledge of culturally appropriate traditions and practices through agency, program, community events, and lived experience. Trust is key when families allow program workers into their homes and lives. Depending on the family, this can take up to six months to develop. At its core, the FPR program is about compassion, cultural connection, and building trust during families' most critical life transitions.

FPCs reported 4,223 direct service hours, defined as the time they spend directly helping families through one-to-one interactions, meetings, or phone calls. The success of the Family Preservation and Reunification program relies on collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and gathering the circle to assure the well-being of families and children.

Referrals

The number of referrals has remained consistent and each FPC works with 10-15 families. We continue to focus on caseload management, best fit, and direct service hours when assigning new families. In collaboration with the Child Safety team, we proactively plan when families are ready to transition to community services.



Tracking the demographics of families, including the ages of the children and the number of female or male led households, allows us to review and assess our program needs and helps shape our focus. This



We were honoured to welcome Mar Nai Yellow Horn (centre left) from Siksika AIKAAYI'SAAPi's Prevention-Early Intervention Program to the Head Office. We provided her with a tour, and she gifted us with a beautiful blanket. Siksika's Preventative Support Services provide prevention and early intervention in building up peoples' strengths and skill capacities through a drop-in or referral process for families, youth and children.

enables us to discuss planning and early intervention with the other programs.

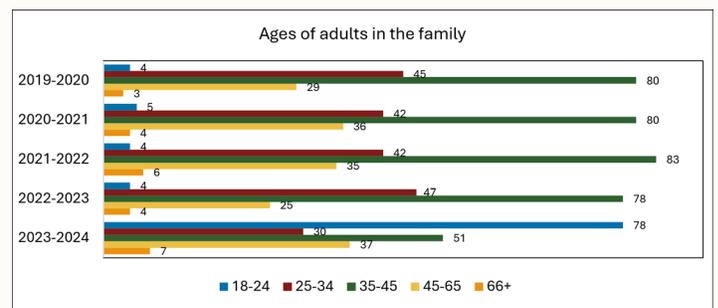
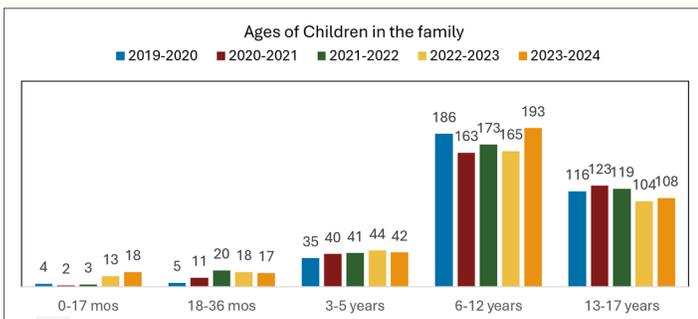
The referrals we receive have primarily been female heads of household (85%) as the main contact for the referral, which has remained consistent for the past five years.

We review the reasons that families transitioned from our program each year, and some of those reasons include: the family no longer requiring support or are not ready for service, scheduling struggles and lack of engagement, families achieving their goals, and in some cases the client has sadly passed.

This year and last year we reviewed the reasons that families transitioned from our program and we identified that our focus on engagement, building

trust and developing rapport is an important area to continue to strengthen within our program through training and exploring within our team meetings. In addition, we are also focusing our attention on increasing our collaborative relationships within the community with community agencies and increasing our family centered activities.

Our FPCs focus intensively on engagement and connection with families which may include: partnering with the referring social worker; and calling, texting, and working with a community organizations to engage in what we call 'assertive outreach'. Our priority for the next year will be to capture our story of engagement by ensuring that when families transition from services we clearly define the reasons in the final transition report.





Cultural

Throughout the year, we organized various activities for families, one of which was the “Spring into Wellness” event which provided families with an opportunity to choose wellness activities they were interested in. Families signed up for activities and visited resource tables to gather information that interested them. The event featured sage smudging, cedar brushing, hair braiding, scalp massage, chair massage, and medicinal products for gifting. Our four resource tables from different organizations, namely First Nations Health Authority Recovery Café, Helping Spirit Lodge Society Housing Program, and REACH Medical. The families were delighted and felt nurtured and cared for. Their positive feedback encouraged us to continue building cultural events throughout the year, ensuring we provide a wide array of options for families to engage in and enjoy.

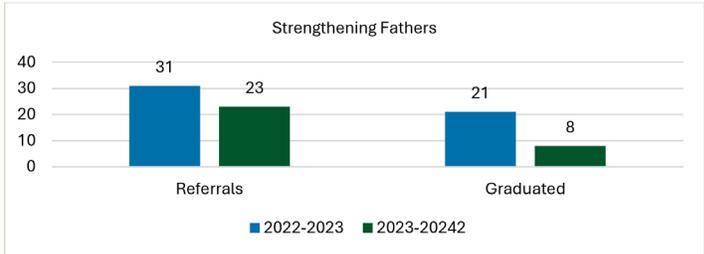
We also collaborated with West Coast Families and Family Services, to jointly host a Truth and Reconciliation Commission event in Musqueam for our staff. West Coast invited us to the event, which they hosted with Dr. Dustin Louie. Our staff

were leaders at the event and highlighted VACFSS restorative practices. We are currently working with West Coast, Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) on an event to develop a shared Elders roster.

We are planning for families to attend our Sage Picking event this upcoming year and to have a Fall Into Healing event for families. We will be looking to the families for their wisdom and input about other teachings we can provide.

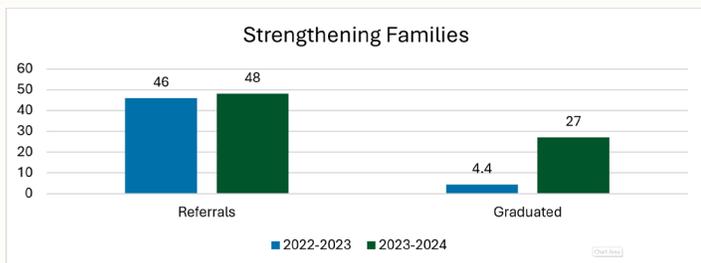
Strengthening Groups

The Strengthening groups continue to be well attended and well received. The 11-week groups run concurrently three times a year and each period includes one Strengthening Families and one Strengthening Fathers group. The expectation of families is that they attend at least nine of the 11 group sessions to receive a certificate. In the first Strengthening Fathers group they had six of the nine fathers receive a certificate, nine of 13 in the second session and six of the nine in the last session. The relational engagement and mentorship within the group is invaluable as the dads share stories about parenting and mentor one another. The dads who reattend are often role models who are more comfortable speaking about their experience, which helps new men get comfortable in the group.



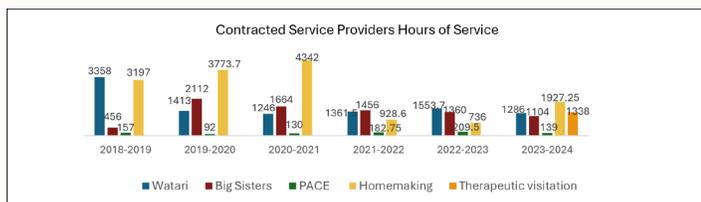
In the first Strengthening Families group there were nine of the 19 participant families who received a certificate, 11 of 15 in the second session, and nine of 12 in the last session. The average graduation rate for Strengthening Families was 63%. Participants start their night with a dinner which allows the

Early Childhood Educators and the Facilitators to observe family interactions and, more importantly, it allows the family to connect with one another and other families in the program. There are often items laid out for the participants to take home and any leftover meals are sent home with the families facing food insecurity.



Associated Services

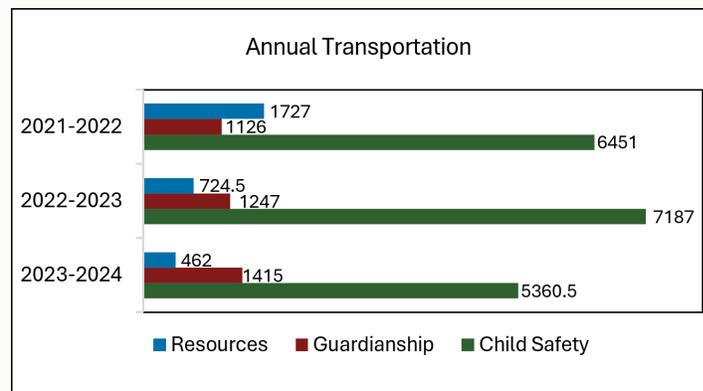
We contract with other agencies for a range of associated services including transportation to facilitate family visits, access supervision, therapy for children, intensive one-to-one support for youth, childcare, and homemaking. Big Sisters provides us with a set number of matches per year outside of their regular waitlist.



Our supervised access hours have remained relatively consistent over the years. Supervised access is provided to families during their visits and can occur in a variety of places including home, office, out in community, and at the space of a community partner.

Over the last while, we have equipped and refreshed the family visitation rooms, with toys and interactive activities such as books and games. Our staff are scheduled to remain nearby during some of the scheduled visits, to provide support and assistance as needed.

Therapeutic access for children aged 0-4 is provided by Atira and visits occur in a home-like environment with a facilitator who provides coaching and guidance to strengthen relationships and nurture attachment between mothers and their child.



Transportation is provided to Child Safety, Guardianship, and Resources for a variety of reasons. It is primarily for families to have visits with their children, to and from school to maintain stability and consistency in the child's life, therapeutic appointments, and visitation with extended family and community. Transportation is reviewed with the teams monthly.

Ongoing Goals of the Family Preservation

The FPR Program continues to work to ensure we are providing consistent, quality services to our children, youth and families. This includes implementing the Family Preservation and Reunification Policy "Standing with Families" and working collaboratively with other programs. Specifically, we continue to meet regularly with other programs, prioritize referrals, troubleshoot, and address conflict with open communication. We have established a CS/ FPR Resolution Protocol for Conflicts Related to Clinical Practice, and a cross-program complaint follow up process. With joint program training and regular joint team gatherings, we hope to improve collaboration. VACFSS remains committed to restorative practice to specifically support concrete needs, strength-based, graduated, and supportive client engagement. 🙏



RESOURCES

Donald Robertshaw

Overview

The VACFSS Resources Program helps ensure children remain connected with their parents, extended family, and community while they are in care. Our focus and collaborative teamwork resulted in children remaining at home with their families; with the provision of respite services, children in continuing care have improved relationships with their parents and families. This year, the Resources Program supported an average of 385 children in care who are living in 202 family care homes at the end of March 2024. The program remains focused on providing children and youth in care with family care homes, with 85% of these children residing in the community with family caregivers. Across all VACFSS programs, reducing the number of children

in care remains a key priority of our Restorative Policy and Practice, consistent with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action for child welfare. As noted in the Child Safety report, there has been a corresponding increase of children in Out-of-Care provisions.

2023 saw the resumption of in-person ceremonies, events, and celebrations. The Caregiver Cultural Camp in July, 2023 focused on Indigenous cultural teachings and activities which brought together over 140 people including Indigenous cultural facilitators, caregivers, children, and youth. The Caregiver Appreciation Event in October 2023 was also a success with over 150 caregivers, partners, and VACFSS staff attending. Inclusive caregiving has been strengthened by the "Gathering Our Medicine" circle centered around healing and strengthening



Rupert Richardson (left) along with a youth drumming at the 2023 Caregiver Cultural Camp.

relationships amongst Indigenous children, youth, caregivers, and their kinship circle.

To assist with caring for infants with special needs, children, and youth, expanding the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous caregivers has been a priority. Continued engagement with Vancouver’s Indigenous community has helped with our recruitment efforts. Specific advertising through Facebook and other social media has been invaluable. Resources has undertaken a specialized recruitment campaign this year with the goal of seeing an increase of our Indigenous caregivers next year.

Resources, along with Guardianship and the Child Safety Program, are taking action to review all child and youth specialized placements to make certain these homes are implementing Inclusive Family Care and ensure that, where possible, extended family, community, and family care homes are utilized. In line with the extension of supports carried over from the pandemic, Resources is also supporting Youth in Care from ages 19 and 21 years who wish to remain with their caregivers. This assistance has been important for youth in care to transition into independent community living.

The program used various means to respond to the increasing numbers of children in child-specific contracts which are intended to provide care for youth and children who require short-term stabilization. The Resources Program has regular management and child-specific placement committee meetings to review how these children can return home, be placed with a relative, and/or with a skilled caregiver. The program manager and social workers are monitoring these placements to ensure the appropriate staffing levels are being used.

The program’s partnerships remain strong for proactively supporting our caregivers to provide improved lived experiences for our children in care. Partnerships include: Lu’ma Native Housing (housing

for caregivers and support & mentoring for youth on independent living), Urban Native Youth Association (staffed group home care for female youth), Kiwassa Neighbourhood House (caregiver housing), Hollyburn Family Services (family caregiver support and staffed group home care for youth), MCFD foster caregiver services (Safe Babies Program & Fostering Early Development), Milieu Child and Family Services (staffed group home care for youth & FASD support services), WJS Canada (staffed group home care for youth and child-specific specialized care), PLEA (child-specific specialized care), Strive (child-specific full time and respite/relief specialized care), Children’s Corner (respite care), Vancouver Coastal Health (“Boundaries” and “Foundation” programs for caregivers), Community Living BC (residential and support services for developmentally challenged adults), and BC Housing (housing for caregivers and staffed group home providers).

Residential Resources Caseload Activity

The average number of children in care has decreased over the last 13 years, from 489 (2010/11) to 385 (2023/24).

The number of children in care by age has decreased in the adolescent 15-18 years group, moderately increased in age groups 10-14 years and 5-9 years, and significantly decreased for children under four years old.

	15-18 years old	10-14 years old	5-9 years old	0-4 years old	Infants
2010/11	144	78	78	116	19
2023/24	114	114	97	45	2

The percentage of children in care residing with family caregivers is currently 85% which has been consistent over the last 13 years.

The total numbers of children in Kith and Kin family care homes (extended family homes) have decreased from 36 children in 2012/13 to 33 children in 2023/24. There is an initiative to transfer legal custody

for children to relatives which has contributed to this decrease. Four children are currently in this arrangement. The Child Safety Program has a significant increase of child placements with extended family members through the Extended Family Program and Transfer of Custody Program. The Resources program deeply appreciates all the Kith and Kin family caregivers for providing long-term support to their family members.

The program remains committed and responsive with 149 family caregivers. The skill level of the caregivers, as indicated through the “Levels of Care System”, remains stable with between 47 to 29 family caregivers in each level. The level system consists of three levels: level one (new family caregivers with limited fostering experience) to level three (full-time family caregivers with substantial experience with children who have significant emotional, behavioural, and physical care needs). There have been several family caregivers who have retired, moved, or suspended family caregiving due to personal

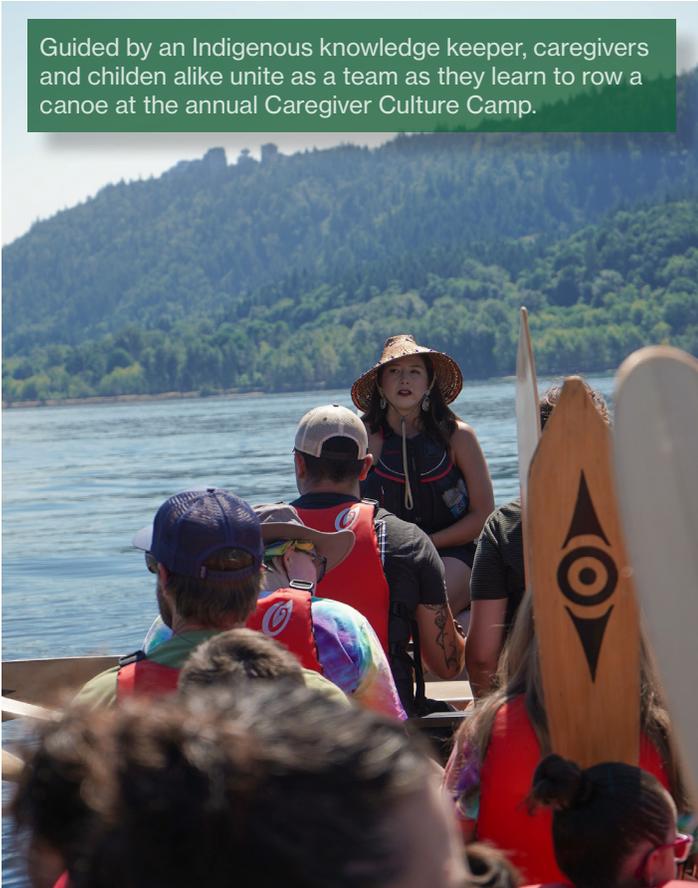
circumstances. The program facilitated 140 child placements in 2023/24, which is down from 192 child placements in 2017/18.

Collaborative planning consultations (“Bringing the Circle Together”) and caregivers’ commitment to placing siblings together has resulted in several children being placed together with their siblings. Collaborative practice was used extensively to support a number of our special needs and high risk/complex children and youth.

The provision of respite care (short-term care for children while in their parent’s care) is an important support service to our families. Respite services continue to be provided by family care homes (87 children) and with the Children’s Corner Respite Home (192 children).

Family caregiver support, monitoring, and training are going well with several interventions. Our supervisor and manager working groups have assisted with improving the identification of high risk/needs children along with assessing and providing additional support for the caregivers. VACFSS Resources supervisors and social workers continue to use a structured tracking tool to ensure all essential tasks are completed, such as contract management, criminal record checks, home visits, annual reviews, annual recordings, relief caregiver checks, and safety checklists. This approach continues to actively monitor and support caregivers who require additional support, such as in-home relief and specialized support for children who have behavioral and mental health issues. The need for enhanced planning and support for caregivers to increase the child’s contact with their parents, family, culture, and community is a priority.

Hollyburn contracted service provider continues to provide specialized training for VACFSS family caregivers. Hollyburn provides the following services to caregivers: caregiver support workers, registered clinical counselors, specialized training, support



Guided by an Indigenous knowledge keeper, caregivers and children alike unite as a team as they learn to row a canoe at the annual Caregiver Culture Camp.



groups, and cultural activities. In addition, Vancouver Coastal Health's "Foundation Program" has helped support family caregivers who have children with mental health issues and suicidal ideation.

The availability of housing for caregivers is a significant barrier in our ability to increase the VACFSS caregiver network. The Dave Pranteau Aboriginal Children's Village (Lu'ma Native Housing), Kiwassa Neighborhood House, and BC Housing continue to provide safe community housing with 23 family care homes and six youth suites.

Caregiver recruitment, in particular Indigenous caregiver recruitment, is a priority at VACFSS. The recruitment social workers have once again been involved with in-person community engagement and promotion activities throughout Vancouver. The program engaged the Vancouver Indigenous community with opportunities to learn about becoming a caregiver, and there was a renewed caregiver recruitment focus with residents of Vancouver and surrounding communities. Some of these community events have included: National Indigenous People Day, community engagement

sessions with Indigenous community members (Friendship Centre and partner housing venues), Italian Days, PRIDE Celebration, and Khatsahlano Day. The recruitment team is highly motivated to continue with these events.

We especially focused on the recruitment of family caregiver applicants who can foster infants, infants with special needs, sibling groups of three or more, and care for children with special needs (significant mental health and development challenges).

Program Achievements and Goals

Moving into the 2024/2025 fiscal year, we look forward to continuing to: enhance family caregiver recruitment focusing on Indigenous applicants; concentrate on family caregiver retention and capacity-building; implement the Inclusive Foster Care planning and monitoring system; increase staff retention, recruitment, and training; increase inter-program child-focused planning; and review and coordinate child-specific specialized placements. 🙏



GUARDIANSHIP

Holly Anderson

Program Overview

The Guardianship Program is currently responsible for supporting 267 urban Indigenous children and youth in care. We provide delegated guardianship services grounded in a commitment to the Calls to Action for Child Welfare in the Truth and Reconciliation Report, the recommendations from the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls report, and in the principles An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families. In the Guardianship Program, we provide a restorative practice approach that emphasizes relationship-based social work and trauma-informed practice. The core of our work focuses on developing holistic care plans with an emphasis on connection to family, community, and culture, with a view to permanency. Our approach to practice situates the child in the centre of their circle surrounded by support from family, community, and child-focused services.

The Guardianship team of 24 staff includes two part-time Indigenous wellness counsellors to support children and youth facing trauma, grief, and loss. We all hold a shared vision of reducing the numbers of Indigenous children in care through a commitment to developing child-specific lifelong plans with an emphasis on returning to family, extended family, and community. We also ensure that those of our youth who are aging out of the care system are leaving with a strong Indigenous identity and a firm vision for their future.

Outcomes for Youth Leaving Care

It has always been Guardianship's practice to continue to support young adults informally post-19 years based on our relationship-based practice

and an acknowledgement of Indigenous youth's vulnerability when leaving care. In 2022, the Province expanded its mandate to formally support youth over 19 with new and enhanced services and benefits with the creation of the Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment (SAJE) program. The program includes the introduction of funding to better support youth and young adults as they transition from care, expanded program eligibility and duration, and the creation of post-19 SAJE Guides to connect young adults from care to supports and services and assist them in achieving their goals through to their 27th birthday. VACFSS has been developing our own approach to SAJE that is reflective of our restorative practice, policies, and youth voices. We formalized our practice with a policy written in partnership with the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) that enshrines our relationship-based practice and continues to support youth post-19 as they navigate their first few years of adulthood.

And we developed and implemented two new positions to support youth transitioning; one for young adults 19-27, and one to support transitions for youth 14-19.

Currently Guardianship is supporting 32 youth over 19 years old on SAJE housing agreements or SAJE support agreements, helping them stay in the residence they were living in when they turned 19. We continue to work with these young people to develop strong transitions to adult supports, post-secondary institutions, and to support them in achieving their goals.

Turning to the youth who aged out of care in 2022, 19 youth aged into community and continue to be supported either through Community Living BC (CLBC) or through the extended supports now



This year, we had the privilege of having Urban Heiltsuk Dancers from the the Heiltsuk Nation perform at VACFSS's annual Holiday Guardianship Dinner. Celebrating the winter solstice, this dinner is an important opportunity for the families we serve to connect over delicious food and holiday spirit.

offered to youth over 19.

In the cohort of 19 youth, ten of them were eligible for Community Living support and transitioned into adult care. Of these ten youth, six remained in their carehomes and their homes were transitioned to CLBC resources. Overall, almost half of the youth turning 19 in this cohort (nine youth) chose to remain in their childcare placement post-19, demonstrating that a strong sense of belonging was achieved through their placement.

This year saw another high rate of children graduating with high school diplomas and leaving certificates. 84% (16 youth) of our cohort achieved this goal, reflecting the program's emphasis on developing strong partnerships with schools and alternative programs committed to individualized and culturally inclusive educational plans for our young people. Guardianship strives to have strong partnerships with Indigenous-focused schools such as Cedar Walk, in our community, and with Indigenous support workers located in schools through the Lower Mainland. This is also a demonstration of our commitment to ensuring our youth have key life skills as they journey out of care.

Permanency Within a Child's Circle

Indigenous children have the right to maintain strong and meaningful relationships with their families, communities, and mentors. Concerted efforts need to be made to protect these connections and to support a child's journey with them. Currently, one in five children in our care (54 children) are formally placed in kith and kin placements with relatives. We maintain a strong commitment to restorative practice, and our belief that Indigenous children have an inherent right to be situated in their family and community.

In alignment with the board's strategic priority, the Calls to Action from the TRC, and the principles of An Act Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples, Guardianship has developed a strong and concerted practice approach to return children to their circles and to seek legal permanency, effectively moving children on from Continuing Custody Orders. Permanency planning begins with a return to family, extended family or to the greater Indigenous community. A plan is reached by consensus including everyone in a child's circle, and importantly by the family and Nation.

Cultural Journeys

Guardianship is committed to the principles of An Act Respecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples and working in partnership with Nations to plan for their children. With several Nations from which we have children in our care, Guardianship has been formally engaging with these Nations to review annual plans in partnership. This year we hosted Wet'suwet'en, Lake Babine Nation, and Heiltsuk Nation in person, and engaged virtually with Lil'wat Nation, Gitxsan Nation, and Sisika Nation in these meeting for their children. Together we discussed planning, the best interests of their children, and took concrete steps to strengthen the child's cultural identity.

Guardianship ensures that the right of children to participate in culture is upheld. This means that the children and youth in our care develop strong Indigenous identities reflective of teachings from their own communities and strong, positive urban Indigenous identities. This work is supported by all our social workers and coordinated by our Lifelong Connections Coordinators.

Youth Engagement

Ensuring our youth are developing a strong Indigenous identity, leadership skills, and a vision for their future is an essential part of the work that

Guardianship does. We continue to engage youth in a variety of creative and cultural ways to ensure they experience opportunities to heal from trauma, have their voices heard, and prepare them for adulthood.

Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)

The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) continued on their path of advocacy, leadership, and raising their voices this year. The 12 young people on the committee are a living example of best practice in honouring the voice of Indigenous youth in and from care. Embedded in the agency, they continued to lead us in best practice, co-created policy, and advocated in the larger community. This year they expanded their scope and added their voices to many projects and initiatives including sitting on a National Youth Advisory Council, presenting at Douglas college and UBC. In the fall, YAC presented to the Our Children Our Way conference, the Light the Way Housing conference, and at a legal conference hosted by the Access to Justice Network.

As outlined in their strategic plan, the youth have chosen to focus on continuing to advocate for comprehensive supports for youth leaving care and aging into community, and have begun to examine the housing crisis as youth leave care. YAC firmly believe that safe, sustainable, and affordable housing is a right for every youth leaving care and is critical to ensure they thrive in community.

This fall, the Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors hosted their 2nd Annual Our Children Our Way Conference. Held at the Vancouver Convention Centre, this conference is an opportunity to foster relationships, collaboration, and networks amongst Indigenous child and family service providers and communities. In front of the over 1,100 attendees, four members of our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) shared their expertise during a conference panel they hosted, "Healing in, speaking out, and speaking up!"



Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness (CRUW)

The Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness (CRUW) program aims to protect the right of Indigenous youth in urban environments to be connected to their cultural heritage through land-based practices. It offers a wide range of opportunities for youth to engage with the land, grow and harvest traditional medicines, and learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, all while fostering a holistic sense of well-being. In 2023, the program proudly completed its 13th year.

CRUW operates at the x^wci'cəsəm Garden, located on the unceded territory of the Musqueam people within the University of British Columbia (UBC) Farm. The garden's name, x^wci'cəsəm, comes from the Musqueam language həŋqəmiñəm' and means "the place where we grow." Since its establishment in 2007 by Dr. Eduardo Jovel, a supporter of CRUW, the garden has been a cornerstone for the program's activities and objectives.

The Indigenous Research Partnerships (IRP), housed within UBC's Faculty of Land and Food Systems, oversees the x^wci'cəsəm Garden and surrounding sacred areas, ensuring that these spaces are preserved with respect for their cultural significance. CRUW's success is built on these partnerships and collaborations with various other organizations, such as the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems and the First Nations House of Learning, which provide valuable resources and support.

Participants learn about traditional plant cultivation and medicine harvesting, and engage in ceremonies, storytelling, and other cultural activities that have been part of Indigenous traditions for generations. The garden and surrounding sacred areas serve as a living classroom, where youth can witness the harmony between people and nature, reinforcing the values of respect, stewardship, and community.

Children's Indigenous Rights, Culture, and Languages Education (CIRCLE)

Children's Indigenous Rights, Culture, and Languages Education (CIRCLE) is a program designed to ensure Indigenous children have the opportunity to connect with their cultural heritage. Recognizing that this connection is a lifelong journey, CIRCLE engages children in cultural practices from an early age. The program brings together Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Cultural Educators, caregivers, and children from diverse Indigenous backgrounds to create a community rooted in Indigenous traditions from across Turtle Island. Cultural Educators keep children engaged and curious about their heritage by designing activities that are age-appropriate and captivating.

In 2023, CIRCLE celebrated the completion of its seventh cycle. The program operates after school at Lu'ma Housing, providing a safe and supportive environment where children and youth can explore their culture with the guidance of mentors and the companionship of peers. Resident Elder April Bennett plays a key role in guiding the participants, offering traditional wisdom, and creating a bridge between generations.

CIRCLE fosters a deep sense of community and belonging, supporting participants as they build a lifelong relationship with their Indigenous heritage. The program underscores the importance of cultural continuity and identity, reinforcing that these connections are vital for both individuals and the broader Indigenous community. 🙌





FINANCE

Jatinder Toor

Society Financial Summary

Revenue for the year ended March 2024 increased to \$61,731,969 which translates to an increase of approximately \$16.4 million from the 2023 fiscal year total of \$45,327,594. Expenses increased by just under \$15.6 million to \$61,695,187 (2023 - \$46,110,725).

The revenue and expense increase corresponds with a \$15,756,119 increase in Direct Program Costs, largely made up of Child in Care costs.

Child Specific Placements costs increased by \$8,738,045 (2024 - \$15,807,006 & 2023 - \$7,068,961), Child in Care Maintenance costs increased by \$1,305,326 (2024 - \$3,372,689 & 2023 - \$2,022,363), Staffed Specialized Resources costs increased by \$1,072,529 (2024 - \$3,960,911 & 2023 - \$2,888,382) and the remaining \$4.8 million is spread out among the rest of the Direct Program Costs, primarily as the result of negotiated wage increases.

VACFSS continually improves the stability and security of the Information Technology (IT) systems, and an external review for compliance with industry standards has shown that VACFSS is meeting the requirements in this area. Diligent reviews of trends and risks are monitored, and VACFSS meets such requirements.

The operational impact on the Net Assets of the agency resulted in a reduction of \$430,329, of which is primarily comprised of Amortization and anticipated within an annual budget.

The Agency is in a healthy financial position to handle expected and/or unexpected cost increases in the short and medium term.

Overview

For the year ended March 31, 2024, the Society's Net Assets have declined by \$430,329, with a total increase of cash and accounts receivables of \$664,607.

Costs for Children in Care and Residential Resources continue to have upward pressure, resulting in increased funding in accordance with the Standardized Funding Agreement. The Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) approval to increase caregiver rates by 25-40% across the various levels of care has contributed to the increase in costs. Funding for these increases has been adjusted and VACFSS is in a good position to carry these increased costs.

Inflationary factors are impacting the costs of food, transportation, travel, and staff related expenses. This is evidenced throughout the financial reports and explains a general increase in expenses within each area.

Such cost increases have been mitigated by consistency in operational adherence to policies and practices, and effective negotiating for services with outside service contractors to contain such costs despite inflationary upward cost trends.

Operational funding has been adjusted and is closely aligning with the agency's expenditures.

Guardianship/Resources

MCFD funding remained about the same. Client travel costs have increased by \$19,652 in 2024. Guardianship/Resources operated as budgeted in 2024.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure funding is based on a percentage calculation of program wage funding and operational costs as identified in the Standardized Funding Agreement (SFA). Funding remained about the same as last year with an increase of \$51,536 bringing the funding up to \$2,727,641 in 2024 (2023 - \$2,676,105).

Training expenditures increased by \$49,136 due to the implementation of leadership training. Other Income investment increased by \$139,251 due to a rise in market interest rates throughout the year.

Insurance related expenses increased by \$3,627 and appear to have stabilized. In the previous year, insurance costs increased by \$24,000 due to global warming and weather-related trends.

Other expenses are consistent with past years, with some minor increases as the result of inflationary factors.

Residential Resources

Residential Resources costs increased by about \$15 million from \$24,074,460 in 2023 to \$39,073,530 in 2024 for the total departmental statement.

Family Preservation and Reunification

Funding has increased in 2024 from 2023, and costs have remained consistent. Except for the increase in funding, 2024 presented like 2023 in expenditures.

Child Safety (formerly Child Protection)

Revenue has slightly increased in 2024 from 2023 to reflect the increases in wages. Overall, most costs have remained relatively consistent with notable differences in family support and operational costs.

Conclusion

VACFSS operated generally as expected for the year ended March 31, 2024, and anticipates operating as budgeted for the upcoming year. 🙏



A coin offering takes place at each annual Honouring the Journey of our Youth ceremony. Esteemed ceremonial witnesses are given \$0.50 in the form of two quarters by members of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC). At one time, blankets cost \$0.50 to buy. Blankets are extremely important gifts as they are seen as offerings of love, affection, warmth, and protection.



AUDITOR'S REPORT

Financial Statements of
VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY
And Independent Auditors' Report thereon

Year ended March 31st, 2024





KPMG LLP

PO Box 10426 777 Dunsmuir Street
Vancouver BC V7Y 1K3
Canada
Telephone (604) 691-3000
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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (the "Entity"), which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024
- the statement of operations for the year then ended
- the statement of changes in net assets for the year then ended
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies

(Hereinafter referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at March 31, 2024, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the **"Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements"** section of our auditor's report.

We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for private enterprises, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

KPMG LLP, an Ontario limited liability partnership and member firm of the KPMG global organization of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Limited, a private English company limited by guarantee. KPMG Canada provides services to KPMG LLP.



In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.



- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Reporting on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

As required by the Societies Act (British Columbia) we report that, in our opinion, the accounting policies applied in preparing and presenting financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding period.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'KPMG LLP' with a horizontal line underneath.

Chartered Professional Accountants

Vancouver, Canada

June 26, 2024

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	Note	2024	2023
Assets			
Current assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents		\$ 5,242,099	\$ 4,511,458
Accounts receivable		1,620,867	1,794,887
Prepaid expenses		418,488	310,502
		7,281,454	6,616,847
Security deposits paid		74,951	74,951
Capital assets	2	1,083,385	1,317,663
		\$ 8,439,790	\$ 8,009,461

Liabilities, Deferred Contributions and Net Assets

Current liabilities:			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	3	\$ 1,533,067	\$ 1,488,210
Payroll liabilities		998,408	654,681
		2,531,475	2,142,891
Deferred contributions	4	180,267	161,309
Deferred capital contributions	5	-	13,995
		2,711,742	2,318,195
Net assets:			
Invested in capital assets	6	1,083,385	1,303,668
Internally restricted capital acquisition		2,289,940	2,289,940
Unrestricted		2,354,723	2,097,658
		5,728,048	5,691,266
Operating lease commitments	7		
Contingencies	8		
Economic dependence	13		
		\$ 8,439,790	\$ 8,009,461

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Approved on behalf of the Board:

DocuSigned by:

 Linda Stiller Director
983D411FC61942F...

DocuSigned by:

 Richard George Director
B760A006F43B4B4...

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Statement of Operations

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	Note	2024	2023
Funding revenues:			
Provincial government contributions			
- Principal funding		\$ 61,378,331	\$ 45,013,697
Deferred contributions:			
Related to capital assets amortization	5	13,995	4,978
		61,392,326	45,018,675
Expenses:			
Direct program costs:			
Automobile expenses		229,018	195,598
Caregiver expenses		542,241	558,484
Child in care costs		2,531,529	2,229,324
Client assistance		91,729	60,988
Collaborative practice costs		8,653	4,981
Contract services		338,754	271,949
Cultural support costs		390,422	404,886
Family support expenses		688,847	681,426
Out of care caregivers		39,040	43,362
Out of care children		48,900	22,160
Out of care maintenance		3,372,689	2,022,363
Program supplies and miscellaneous		133,386	185,472
Residential resources cost		35,158,600	21,493,443
Salaries and benefits		10,611,808	10,258,011
Telephone and cellular		68,289	65,339
		54,253,905	38,497,786
Service costs:			
Amortization		228,124	251,547
Bank charges and interest		75	300
Equipment leasing		17,310	4,691
Office and general		314,115	271,309
Public relations and community services		245	595
Rent and repairs		1,732,646	1,670,277
Salaries, labour and benefits		1,562,519	1,463,192
Special events		2,404	5,250
Staff related costs		57,550	84,770
Telephone, fax and cellular		121,123	144,991
		4,036,111	3,896,922

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Statement of Operations (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	Note	2024	2023
Expenses:			
General and administration expenses:			
Amortization		45,108	57,334
Annual general meeting		-	2,208
Bank charges and interest		11,990	7,291
Board expenses		74,890	59,512
Computer supplies		81,391	30,639
Contract services		26,107	36,601
Equipment leasing		2,446	2,447
Insurance		56,383	52,756
Office and general		72,590	84,807
Professional dues and membership		34,104	42,582
Professional fees		123,095	263,267
Public relations and community services		25,105	67,771
Rent and repairs		189,731	185,016
Salaries, labour and benefits		2,361,376	2,601,074
Special events		15,492	23,759
Staff related costs		253,725	168,197
Telephone, fax and cellular		31,638	30,756
		<u>3,405,171</u>	<u>3,716,017</u>
Deficiency of revenue over expenses before undernoted		(302,861)	(1,092,050)
Other revenues:			
Other income	10	339,643	308,919
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses		<u>\$ 36,782</u>	<u>\$ (783,131)</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Statement of Changes in Net Assets

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 5,691,266	\$ 6,474,397
Excess of revenue (deficiency) over expenses:		
Guardianship of resources (schedule 1)	58,743	150,929
Infrastructure (schedule 2)	114,187	(617,607)
Residential resources (schedule 3)	(252,509)	(185,243)
Family preservation (schedule 4)	650,320	89,631
Child protection (schedule 5)	(533,959)	(220,841)
	36,782	(783,131)
Net assets, end of year	\$ 5,728,048	\$ 5,691,266

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Cash provided by:		
Operations:		
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$ 36,782	\$ (783,131)
Items not involving cash:		
Amortization	291,771	317,231
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(13,995)	(4,978)
	314,558	(470,878)
Changes in non cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	174,020	(1,467,937)
Prepaid expenses	(107,986)	(130,953)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	44,857	358,681
Deferred contributions	18,958	(25,121)
Payroll liabilities	343,727	40,027
Security deposits paid	-	11,500
	788,134	(1,684,681)
Investing:		
Acquisitions of capital assets	(57,493)	(209,709)
Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	730,641	(1,894,390)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	4,511,458	6,405,848
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	\$ 5,242,099	\$ 4,511,458

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2024

Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (the "Society" or "VACFSS") was incorporated on May 28, 1992 under the laws of British Columbia. On May 3, 2017, the Society transitioned to the new Societies Act (British Columbia). The Society is a registered charitable organization under the Income Tax Act and accordingly is exempt from income taxes, provided certain requirements of the Income Tax Act are met.

The purposes of the Society are to:

- (a) supply essential social services to aboriginal children and families who are at risk, and their communities, by:
 - (i) providing delegated child welfare and related services on behalf of government agencies.
 - (ii) acting as a liaison between government agencies and aboriginal children, families and communities.
 - (iii) assisting aboriginal children and families to reconnect with their communities, culture and heritage.
- (b) promote the well being of aboriginal children and families, and encourage their full participation in Canadian society;
- (c) enter into contracts which may be conducive to the Society's aims with any person, corporation or government agency;
- (d) solicit, collect, receive, acquire, hold and invest money and property, both real and personal, received by gift, contribution, bequest devised, or otherwise, sell and convert property, both real and personal, into cash, and use the funds of the Society and proceeds, income, rent, and profits derived from any property of the Society in furtherance of the purposes set out above,
- (e) purchase, lease, sell or hold such property, equipment and materials as are deemed necessary to accomplish the Society's purposes; and
- (f) do all such things as may be necessary or conducive to the attainment of these purposes. The Society must primarily but not exclusively service aboriginal children, families and communities in the lower mainland of British Columbia.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

1. Significant accounting policies:

These financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not for profit organizations in Part III of the Chartered Professional Accountants Canada Handbook and include the following significant accounting policies:

(a) Cash and cash equivalents:

Cash equivalents consist of high interest savings accounts held within investment portfolio.

(b) Capital assets:

Purchased capital assets are recorded at cost of acquisition plus any directly attributable cost of preparing the asset for its intended use. Amortization is provided using the declining balance method and following annual rates:

Asset	Rate
Office equipment	30%
Vehicles	30%
Computer	30%
Telephone equipment	30%
Computer software	100%

Leasehold improvements are amortized on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease.

The Society reviews the carrying amount of capital assets for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the asset no longer contributes to the Society's ability to provide services, or that the value of future economic benefits or service potential associated with the asset is less than its carrying amount. If such conditions exist, an impairment loss is measured and recorded in the statement of operations at the amount by which the carrying amount of the net asset exceeds its fair value or replacement cost.

(c) Revenue recognition:

The Society follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions.

Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the appropriate fund for the year in which the related expenses are incurred. Contributed capital assets or contributions restricted for the construction or purchase of capital assets are deferred and amortized into revenue on a declining balance basis, at a rate corresponding with the amortization rate for the related capital assets.

Revenue received for maintenance funding shortfalls of prior periods is recognized as revenue in the period received as the amount is not reasonably determinable at year end.

Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Interest income from cash and investments is recognized over the terms of the respective investments using the effective interest method.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

(d) Employee future benefits:

The Society offers a pension plan with a defined benefit provision which covers all employees of the Society. The plan is administered by the Government of British Columbia and annual contributions to the pension plan, as advised by the plan administrators, are expensed when paid (note 8).

(e) Financial instruments:

All financial assets including the Society's short and long term investments, except for investments that are quoted in an active market are measured at amortized cost. Amortized cost is the amount at which a financial asset is measured at initial fair value plus financing fees and transaction costs that are directly attributable to their acquisition. These financial assets are thereafter carried at cost plus the cumulative amortization of any difference between that initial amount and the maturity amount using the straight line amortization method.

Equity instruments, if any, that are quoted in an active market are stated at fair value. Changes in fair value are recognized in income in the period the changes occur. Transaction costs to acquire or dispose of these securities are recognized in net income in the period during which they are incurred.

Financial assets are assessed for impairment on an annual basis at the end of the fiscal year if there are indicators of impairment. If there is an indicator of impairment, the Society determines if there is a significant adverse change in the expected amount or timing of future cash flows from the financial asset. If there is a significant adverse change in the expected cash flows, the carrying value of the financial asset is reduced to the recoverable amount that could be realized from selling the financial asset or the amount that the Society expects to realize by exercising its right to any collateral. If events and circumstances reverse in a future period, an impairment loss will be reversed to the extent of the improvement, not exceeding the initial carrying value.

Financial liabilities, including accounts payable and accrued liabilities are measured at amortized cost.

(f) Measurement uncertainty:

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not for profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and the disclosure of contingent liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Management reviews all significant estimates affecting its financial statements on a recurring basis and records the effect of any necessary adjustments in the year in which the estimates are revised. Actual results could differ from the estimates.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

(g) Donated materials and services:

The Society and its members benefit from donated services in the form of volunteer time for various programs. Because of the difficulty in determining their fair value, these contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements.

Donated goods and other donated services are recorded in these financial statements only when used in the normal course of the Society's operations and would otherwise have been purchased and a fair value can be reasonably estimated.

2. Capital assets

			2024	2023
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Office equipment	\$ 302,338	\$ 282,221	\$ 20,117	\$ 30,076
Vehicles	190,789	123,272	67,517	30,453
Computer	971,957	780,534	191,423	271,328
Telephone equipment	57,433	48,687	8,746	11,868
Leasehold improvements	1,326,772	531,190	795,582	973,938
Equipment and furnishings	\$ 2,849,289	\$ 1,765,904	\$ 1,083,385	\$ 1,317,663

Amortization for the year amounted to \$291,771 (2023: \$317,231) which consist of amortization expense of \$18,539 (2023: \$8,350) recognized in Child in care expense under Direct program costs, \$228,124 (2023: \$251,547) in Service costs and \$45,108 (2023: \$57,334) in General and administration expenses.

3. Accounts payable and accrued liabilities:

Included in accounts payable and accrued liabilities are government remittances payable of \$53,408 (2023: \$53,048), which includes amounts payable for payroll related taxes.

4. Deferred contributions:

Deferred contributions represent unspent resources externally restricted and unrestricted operating funding received in the current period that is related to the subsequent period.

Pursuant to a board resolution passed on March 25, 2014, it was resolved that effective April 1, 2013, future surpluses arising from restricted programs be transferred to the unrestricted fund to be used for any programs that require additional funding. Any deficits in restricted programs will be funded by the unrestricted fund. All the surpluses remaining after interfund transfers have been transferred to the unrestricted fund which is consistently followed on an annual basis.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

5. Deferred capital contributions:

Deferred contributions related to capital assets represent the unamortized portions of equipment and leasehold improvements acquired with restricted contributions.

The changes for the year in the deferred contributions balances are as follows:

	2024	2023
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 13,995	\$ 18,973
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(13,995)	(4,978)
Balance, end of year	\$ -	\$ 13,995

6. Invested in capital assets:

(a) Invested in capital assets is calculated as follows:

	2024	2023
Capital assets (note 2)	\$ 1,083,385	\$ 1,317,663
Amounts financed by:		
Deferred capital contributions (note 5)	-	(13,995)
	\$ 1,083,385	\$ 1,303,668

(b) Change in net assets invested in capital assets is calculated as follows:

	2024	2023
Deficiency of revenue over expenses:		
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	\$ 13,995	\$ 4,978
Amortization of capital assets	(291,771)	(317,231)
	(277,776)	(312,253)
Net change in investment in capital assets:		
Purchase of capital assets with unrestricted funds	57,493	209,709
	\$ (220,283)	\$ (102,544)

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

7. Operating lease commitments:

The Society occupies leased premises in various buildings under operating leases. The annual charges consist of the basic rent and the proportion share of operating expenses. The Society also leases various office equipment and automobiles which are held under operating leases.

The future minimum operating lease payments in respect of office premises, automobiles and equipment for each of the next five years and thereafter, are as follows:

2025	\$ 1,060,217
2026	759,168
2027	506,304
2028	400,260
2029	436,080
	<hr/>
	\$ 3,162,029

8. Contingencies:

The Society is involved in an ongoing legal matter pertaining to a human rights complaint. In November 2022, the BC Human Rights Tribunal (the "Tribunal") made a finding of discrimination and ordered that the Society pay \$150,000 to the complainant. The Society successfully challenged the Tribunal's decision on judicial review: in January 2024, the BC Supreme Court quashed the Tribunal's decision and remitted the matter to the Tribunal for re-consideration. The BC Supreme Court's decision is currently under appeal at the BC Court of Appeal and will be heard in December 2024. Management continues to defend itself against these allegations, however the ultimate outcome is not determinable and accordingly no provision has been made in these financial statements.

The Society is involved in an ongoing civil litigation matter brought by a parent whose child is currently in the Society's care. In April 2024 the plaintiff, a self-represented litigant with an ongoing child protection matter, filed a civil claim against the Society at BC Supreme Court. The plaintiff seeks damages for alleged physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and racism. The Society's management believes the claim against the Society is without merit and the Society denies all allegations. As the outcome of the lawsuit and any liability to the Society cannot be reasonably determined at this time, no provision has been made in these financial statements.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

9. Pension plan:

VACFSS and its employees contribute to the Public Service Pension Plan (a jointly trustee pension plan). The Public Service Pension Board of Trustees, representing plan members and employers, is responsible for administering the plan, including investment of assets and administration of benefits. The plan is a multi employer defined benefit pension plan. Basic pension benefits are based on a formula. As at March 31, 2023, the plan has about 71,000 (2022: 68,387) active members and approximately 55,000 (2022: 53,694) retired members.

The latest actuarial valuation as at March 31, 2023, indicated a funding surplus of \$4,491 million for basic pension benefits. The next valuation will be March 2026 with the result included in the March 2027 financial statements.

Employers participating in the plan record their pension expense as the amount of employer contributions made during the fiscal year (defined contribution pension plan accounting). This is because the plan records accrued liabilities and accrued assets for the plan in aggregate, resulting in no consistent and reliable basis for allocating the obligation, assets and cost to individual employers participating in the plan.

VACFSS paid approximately \$1,014,316 (2023: \$971,336) for employer contributions to the plan during the year ended March 31, 2024.

10. Other income:

	2024	2023
Culturally Relevant Urban Wellness ("CRUW") grants	\$ 2,083	\$ 13,313
Developing The Gifts of Children Fund	8,238	18,047
Interest income	270,530	160,658
Miscellaneous income	58,767	116,811
Memberships	25	90
	<u>\$ 339,643</u>	<u>\$ 308,919</u>

11. Healthcare benefit plan:

Healthcare Benefit Trust ("HBT") is a not for profit health and welfare trust that provides group health and welfare benefits on behalf of participating employers for nearly 100,000 eligible employees, their eligible dependents, and beneficiaries employed in health care and social services in British Columbia and the Yukon. The Trust was established in 1979 by the Health Labour Relations Association ("HLRA"), now part of the Health Employers Association of BC ("HEABC").

VACFSS is a member of the Community Social Services Employers' Association that entered into a contractual agreement with the trustees of the HBT as a participating employer to participate in the Community Social Services Group Benefits plan.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

11. Healthcare benefit plan (continued):

Under the agreement, if the Society was to leave the plan for any reason, it will be subject to an exit levy representing its share of any unfunded actuarial liabilities in respect of all the benefit programs that the Society participated in, as of the termination date.

As at March 31, 2024, there was no exit levy payable that was associated with VACFSS as the Society doesn't expect to leave the HBT.

12. Financial risks and concentration of credit risk:

(a) Liquidity risk:

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Society will be unable to fulfill its obligations on a timely basis or at a reasonable cost. The Society manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its operational requirements. The Society prepares budget and cash forecasts to ensure it has sufficient funds to fulfill its obligations. There has been no change to the risk from the prior year.

(b) Credit risk:

Credit risk refers to the risk that a counterparty may default on its contractual obligations resulting in a financial loss. The Society is exposed to credit risk with respect to its cash, investments, and accounts receivable. The Society assesses, on a continuous basis, accounts receivable and provides for any amounts that are not collectible in the allowance for doubtful accounts. Cash and investments are held with a large Canadian bank and credit risk is considered low. There has been no change to the risk from prior year.

(c) Market risk:

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk comprises three types of risk: currency risk, interest rate risk and other price risk. It is management's opinion that the Society is not exposed to significant currency risk or other price risk. There has been no change to the risk from prior year.

(d) Interest rate risk:

Interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The fair values of fixed rate financial instruments are subject to change, since fair values fluctuate inversely with changes in market interest rates. The cash flows related to floating rate financial instruments change as market interest rates change.

13. Economic dependence:

The Society is dependent on the Ministry of Children and Family Development to provide sufficient funds to continue operations, replace essential equipment and complete its capital projects.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2024

14. Disclosure of remuneration:

The information requirements, under section 36(1) of the Societies Act (British Columbia) with regards to the disclosure obligations of the society's directors, employees and contractors, remuneration are as follows:

Directors and officers:

No director or officer received remuneration in current year.

Employees and contractors:

For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, the Society paid total remuneration of \$39,233,745 (2023 \$26,708,768) to employees and contractors for services, each of whom received total annual remuneration of \$75,000 or greater.

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Guardianship and Resources (R00139809)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 1

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Provincial government contributions - Principal funding	\$ 6,413,765	\$ 6,545,010
CRUW grant	-	13,313
Other income	10,321	105,536
	6,424,086	6,663,859
Deferred contributions:		
Related to capital assets amortization	9,404	3,373
	6,433,490	6,667,232
Direct program costs:		
Automobile expenses	89,222	76,246
Contract services	81,478	78,197
Cultural intervention costs	278,353	307,678
Program supplies	1,471	2,591
Salaries and benefits	4,169,772	4,006,329
Staff expenses	35,701	45,672
Telephone and cellular	29,433	26,064
	4,685,430	4,542,777
Child-in-care costs:		
Allowances/dental	62,586	65,916
Client minding costs	26,062	63,355
Client travel	433,015	413,363
Clothing grant	19,123	15,939
Equipment	49,780	29,258
Education/school events	203,391	145,643
Foods and household	71,046	61,552
Living with family and friends	104,722	69,796
Medical expenditures	102,864	98,164
Medical/Dental expenses	5,353	8,523
Others	235,639	208,231
Professional support and services	309,545	283,646
Recognizing milestones	14,747	14,255
	1,637,873	1,477,641
Developing the Gifts of our Children	19,118	16,336
Integrated services	80,135	70,292
	1,737,126	1,564,269
Net funding excess contribution	\$ 10,934	\$ 560,186

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Guardianship and Resources (R00139809) (continued)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 1

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Services costs:		
Amortization	\$ 54,050	\$ 37,641
Equipment leasing	5,679	438
Office and general	118,164	114,269
Public relations and community services	-	327
Rent	580,642	573,874
Salaries, labour and benefits	578,002	529,321
Security	16,484	12,180
Special events	2,335	2,250
Staff related costs	23,004	26,821
Telephone fax and cellular	42,540	53,177
	<u>1,420,900</u>	<u>1,350,298</u>
Deficiency of revenues over expenses before transfers	(1,409,966)	(790,112)
Interfund transfers	1,468,709	941,041
Excess of revenues over expenses for the year	<u>\$ 58,743</u>	<u>\$ 150,929</u>

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Infrastructure (R000139810)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 2

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Provincial government contributions - Principal funding	\$ 2,727,642	\$ 2,676,105
Other income	329,321	190,070
	3,056,963	2,866,175
Deferred contributions:		
Related to capital assets amortization	4,590	1,605
Net funding contributions	\$ 3,061,553	\$ 2,867,780
General and administrative expenses:		
Annual general meeting	\$	\$ 2,208
Amortization	45,108	57,334
Bank charges and interest	11,990	7,291
Board expenses	74,890	59,512
Computer support	81,390	30,639
Contract services	26,107	36,601
Equipment leasing	2,446	2,447
Insurance	56,383	52,756
Office and general	72,590	84,805
Professional dues and memberships	34,104	42,582
Professional fees	123,095	246,141
Public relations and community services	25,105	67,771
Rent and repairs	189,731	185,016
Salaries, labour and benefits	2,361,376	2,601,074
Special events	15,492	19,979
Staff related costs	246,317	167,689
Telephone fax and cellular	31,639	30,757
	3,397,763	3,694,602
Deficiency of revenues over expenses before transfers	(336,210)	(826,822)
Interfund transfers	450,397	209,215
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses for the year	\$ 114,187	\$ (617,607)

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Residential Resources (R000139808)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 3

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Provincial government contributions - Principal funding	\$ 39,686,938	\$ 24,153,744
Direct program costs:		
Out of care maintenance	3,372,690	2,022,363
Residential resources costs	34,638,944	21,061,696
	<u>38,011,634</u>	<u>23,084,059</u>
Child-in-care cost:		
Integrated services	36,122	30,656
Respite costs	483,534	401,261
	<u>519,656</u>	<u>431,917</u>
Caregiver costs:		
Caregivers expenses	416,404	461,041
Foster parent appreciation night	18,626	14,521
Foster parent recruitment	29,803	11,301
Kiwassa Housing	77,408	71,621
	<u>542,241</u>	<u>558,484</u>
Excess of revenues over expenses before transfers	613,407	79,284
Interfund transfers	(865,916)	(264,527)
Deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year	<u>\$ (252,509)</u>	<u>\$ (185,243)</u>

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Family Preservation (R000139806)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 4

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Provincial government contributions - Principal funding	\$ 3,615,529	\$ 2,996,600
Direct program costs:		
Automobile expenses	27,147	8,428
Client assistance and travel	47,651	10,591
Contract services	168,319	128,087
Cultural intervention costs	13,825	7,115
Program services	128,343	180,161
Program supplies	1,018	1,872
Salaries and benefits	1,500,163	1,424,488
Telephone and cellular	8,037	8,459
	1,894,503	1,769,201
Net funding contributions	\$ 1,721,026	\$ 1,227,399
Service costs:		
Amortization	\$ 6,605	\$ 8,786
Bank charges and interest	-	75
Contract services	-	17,126
Equipment leasing	1,878	181
Office and general	21,740	33,161
Rent and repairs	263,556	256,882
Salaries, labour and benefits	224,085	227,818
Special events	1,064	5,004
Staff related costs	11,415	17,892
Telephone fax and cellular	27,330	29,874
	557,673	596,799
Excess of revenues over expenses before transfers	1,163,353	630,600
Interfund transfers	(513,033)	(540,969)
Excess of revenues over expenses for the year	\$ 650,320	\$ 89,631

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Child Protection (R000139811)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 5

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Provincial government contributions - Principal funding	\$ 8,934,458	\$ 8,642,238
Direct program costs:		
Automobile expenses	120,057	111,432
Contract services	88,957	65,665
Salaries and benefits	4,941,873	4,827,194
Staff expenses	-	2,458
Telephone and cellular	30,815	30,816
	<u>5,181,702</u>	<u>5,037,565</u>
Child-in-care costs:		
Allowances for inter/out provincial transfers	8,905	8,215
Camp costs	19,420	14,109
Client minding costs	32,954	119,582
Client travel	181,710	66,315
Clothing grant	19,258	22,975
Education/school events	6,455	3,704
Equipment	29,225	18,509
Foods and household	68,029	39,573
Good and services	38,096	15,570
Medical/dental expenses	34,866	17,527
Others	8,869	4,195
Recognizing milestones	8,983	5,568
	<u>456,770</u>	<u>335,842</u>
	<u>5,638,472</u>	<u>5,373,407</u>
Carried forward	\$ 3,295,986	\$ 3,268,831

VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES SOCIETY

Child Protection (R000139811) (continued)

Schedule of Revenues and Expenses

Schedule 5

Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024	2023
Brought forward	\$ 3,295,986	\$ 3,268,831
Other program costs:		
Out-of-care children	48,900	22,160
Out-of-care caregivers	39,040	43,362
Integrated services	356,752	345,381
Family support expenses	669,728	665,090
Cultural intervention costs	98,244	90,093
Collaborative practice costs	19,445	10,369
	1,232,109	1,176,455
Net funding contributions	2,063,877	2,092,376
Services costs:		
Amortization	167,469	205,120
Automobile expenses	-	322
Bank charges and interest	75	225
Equipment leasing	9,753	4,073
Office and general	173,152	119,951
Public relations and community services	245	268
Rent	872,490	828,739
Salaries, labour and benefits	760,698	707,056
Special events	68	748
Staff related costs	22,475	40,014
Telephone fax and cellular	51,254	61,941
	2,057,679	1,968,457
Excess of revenues over expenses before transfers	6,198	123,919
Interfund transfers	(540,157)	(344,760)
Deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year	\$ (533,959)	\$ (220,841)

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Aboriginal Front Door Society
- Aboriginal Mother Centre Society
- Aboriginal Wellness Program
- ACCESS
- Alan Cashmore Centre
- ARCUS Community Living
- Asante Centre
- Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC (ANHBC)
- Atira Women's Resource Society
- Avocette Technology Together
- Ayás Méhmen Child & Family Services
- BabyGoRound
- Battered Women's Service Society
- BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations
- BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Region
- BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre
- Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver
- Big Sisters of BC
- Boudreau and Jang
- Boundaries Program
- Broadway Youth Resource Centre
- Cedar Brush Site Services & Janitorial Inc.
- Cedar Valley Community Services
- Centre for Sustainable Food Systems - UBC Farm
- Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at UBC Farm
- Child & Adolescent Response Team (CART)
- Child & Family Clinic (BC Children's Hospital)
- Children's Foundation
- Community Living British Columbia
- Community Social Services Employers Assoc.
- Connexus Family & Children Services
- Crabtree Corner
- Douglas College Social Work & Child and Youth Care
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (DEWC)
- Drake Medox Health Services
- Family Services of Greater Vancouver
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
- First Nations Health Authority
- First United Church
- Fostering Early Development Program
- Foundry
- Fraser Valley Aboriginal Child and Family Services
- Gitxsan Child & Family Services Society
- Greater Vancouver Food Bank
- Healthiest Babies (Coastal Health)
- Helping Spirit Lodge Society
- Hollyburn Family Services
- Indigenous Perspectives Society
- Indigenous Research Partnerships with the Faculty of Land and Food Systems
- Indigenous Services Canada
- John Howard Society of North Island
- Kettle Society
- Kids Up Front - Vancouver Chapter
- Kílala Lelum Health and Wellness Cooperative
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
- Legal Services Society
- Lu'ma Native Housing Society
- Métis Family Services
- Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
- Metro Vancouver Indigenous Services Society
- Milieu Children and Family Services
- Ministry of Children & Family Development
- MOSAIC
- Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of British Columbia
- Naturfect Natural Solutions Inc
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- North Shore Disability Resource Centre
- PACE Society
- Pacific Association of First Nations Women
- Pacific Legal Education Association (PLEA)
- Quest Food Exchange
- Raven Song Community Health Centre
- RayCam Co-operative Centre
- Reach Community Health Centre
- Recovery Café
- Representative for Children & Youth
- Safe Babies Program
- Sanctuary Stabilization Program
- Sheway
- Sorella House for Women
- SOS Children's Village
- St. Leonard's Society
- St. Paul's Hospital - Providence Health Care
- Stone House Child & Youth Services
- Strive Living Society
- Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children
- Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services
- The PACE Program
- The Treehouse
- UBC Indigenous Legal Clinic
- Union Gospel Mission
- University of British Columbia School of Social Work
- Urban Native Youth Association
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
- Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society
- Vancouver Coastal Health / Mental Health Services
- Vancouver Resources Society
- Warriors Against Violence Society
- Watari Counselling & Support Services
- Westcoast Family Centres Society
- WJS | Shortstop Youth Resources

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



VACFSS Organization Chart - Authorized Positions

FTE	TITLE
21.0	Executive/Infrastructure
71.5	Child Safety
19.5	Family Preservation
23.3	Resource
32.4	Guardianship
168.5	FTE Total

01 April 2024



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