



For Immediate Release
March 28, 2023

The BC First Nations Justice Council Announces Details of Regional Indigenous Justice Centre Expansion

*Justice Council to Engage Partner Nations and Prospective Staff in
Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Surrey and Nanaimo*

tkwəlniw̓t (Westbank), Okanagan Syilx Territory, BC:

The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) has confirmed partnerships with access to justice specialists [CALIBRATE](#) and Indigenous capital projects design firm [Reimagine Gathering](#) to support the opening of five Indigenous Justice Centres (Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, Surrey and Nanaimo).

Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) offer culturally appropriate justice services to support Indigenous peoples with their interactions in the colonial legal system. Each IJC is designed collaboratively with the Rights and Title holders on whose territory they are located, and those within the broader catchment areas to ensure they meet the needs of the local Indigenous populations.

Sarah McCoubrey, Partner and Strategist with CALIBRATE, serving in the role of Interim Provincial Director of IJCs, is leading the rapid systems change necessary to support the scaling up and replication of the IJC model across the province. Tāltān Indigenous Design and Project Planner Tiffany Creyke, and Métis Architect Tiffany Shaw, are leading the Reimagine Team overseeing project management, space selection, planning, design and the community engagement necessary to ensure that BCFNJC's five regional IJCs are developed and opened in a good way.

Initial site visits to each of the future homes of these IJCs will take place from April 3, 2023, through May 5, 2023. Over the late spring and summer, all First Nations and related organizations whose territory surrounds each of the RIJCs will be invited and encouraged to engage with the BCFNJC as partner communities.

At each site visit the BCFNJC will host [Continuing Professional Development](#) (CPD) events (Law Society of BC accreditation pending) for lawyers and paralegals. The CPD events will focus on proper applications of *Gladue* principles across the existing

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criminal legal system. Members of the Justice Council and senior staff will be available to discuss the benefits of working with the BCFNJC team. BCFNJC anticipates hiring upwards of 50 legal professionals by the end of 2023.

“We are unwinding and undoing the powerful and destructive effects that the current justice system has had on our relatives,” said Rosalie Yazzie, Acting Chair of the BCFNJC. “Through strong Indigenous leadership, a team of valued, subject-matter experts and experienced competent staff members, we are pushing forward to create a better justice system for First Nations peoples.”

BACKGROUND

The BCFNJC has a clear and strong mandate from all First Nations in BC to transform the existing criminal justice system to make it less harmful to First Nations while at the same time aiding and supporting First Nations in advancing self-determination through the recognition and implementation of their legal orders, traditions and customs related to justice. The BC First Nations Justice Strategy (Justice Strategy) outlines this critical work.

One critical initiative of the Strategy is the creation of 15 Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) (Strategy 4). IJCs provide culturally appropriate information, advice, support, and legal services directly to Indigenous people at the community level. Currently, there are 4 brick-and-mortar IJCs (in Prince Rupert, Prince George, the Nicola Valley (Merritt) and Chilliwack (opening this spring) and 1 virtual IJC (which provides no-cost legal services to Indigenous peoples regardless of their geography).

On [November 20, 2022](#), Premier Eby announced that the Province of British Columbia will fully invest in the establishment and long-term operation of ten new IJCs over the next two years. The BCFNJC received a mandate from the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the First Nations Summit, and the BC Assembly of First Nations to open five Regional IJCs (RIJCs) by the close of 2023.

These next five RIJCs will open in:

1. Kelowna
2. Surrey
3. Vancouver
4. Victoria and
5. Nanaimo

Please visit bcfnjc.com/IJCs for more information.

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ABOUT THE BCFNJC

The BC First Nations Justice Council has been entrusted with the mandate to transform the justice system and create better outcomes for Indigenous people through implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy.

The strategy, signed March 06, 2020, was jointly developed by the BC First Nations Justice Council, BC First Nations communities and the Province of British Columbia. It includes 43 actions along two paths which involve the reformation of the current system as well as the restoration of First Nations' legal traditions and structures.

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