



For Immediate Release
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Now Open: Indigenous Justice Centre Downtown Vancouver will provide Indigenous-led legal supports and services

From Gladue Reports to legal representation, the new centre located on 510 Beatty Street will offer critical justice services, anchored in community, to Indigenous people

Unceded & Ancestral Territories of the x̣ʷməθkʷəŋəm (Musqueam), Sḵw̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwəta! (Tseil-Waututh) Nations, Vancouver, BC:

The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) is excited to host a community open house of the Vancouver Indigenous Justice Centre (IJC) on January 10, 2024, inviting community members, local service providers and justice partners to tour the new space. In the heart of Downtown Vancouver, the new IJC will be a transformative justice hub from which Indigenous people can access all the supports and services they need – from lawyers who have been trained to provide culturally appropriate services, to Elders and Knowledge Keepers who can support alternative pathways of healing and justice.

Navigating the colonial justice system is a challenging, alienating, and frustrating experience for many Indigenous people and communities. The Vancouver IJC is an Indigenous-led solution that will transform a fundamentally broken system. The existing justice system negatively impacts all areas of an individual's life, from mental health to housing and employment. To allay that impact, the Vancouver IJC will connect Indigenous people not only to a comprehensive range of legal services, but to wraparound supports, including housing, diversion, safety, treatment, and restorative justice programs. The Vancouver IJC is designed to fully envelope Indigenous people in care and compassion, providing them with tools and services to navigate justice structures and processes that for too long have been harmful and not helpful to Indigenous individuals and communities.

Importantly, the Vancouver IJC will be an integral, dynamic space to support and collaborate with First Nations working to transform the justice system, assert sovereignty over law, and restore their own justice solutions at the community-level.

BC First Nations Justice Council

303-1979 Old Okanagan Hwy, Westbank, BC. V4T 3A4 Office: 778-940-1520
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“Community is at the heart of IJCs,” stated Kory Wilson, BCFNJC Chair. “The BC First Nations Justice Council has engaged and worked collaboratively with First Nations communities and leaders to ensure IJCs are anchored in community connections. Through ongoing collaboration and by weaving together a supportive and caring network of local Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Outreach and Resource Workers, lawyers, paralegals, and legal staff, Indigenous people will receive access the justice and wraparound supports they need. The new Regional IJC in Vancouver is a testament to these communal relationships, which is why BCFNJC is particularly humbled to invite community organizations, local service providers, Indigenous organizations, and other justice sector professionals to tour the Vancouver IJC. They will be able to meet our team, familiarize themselves with the work we can do to help their clients, and strengthen our relationships with one another in community and in a good way.”

As part of Strategy 4 of the *BC First Nations Justice Strategy*, BCFNJC has been leading the creation of a network of IJCs across province, with support from the Province of BC. The Vancouver IJC is one of the five recently established Regional IJCs that will be serving Indigenous people in Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Surrey, and Kelowna. BCFNJC has already opened four physical IJCs located in Merritt, Chilliwack, Prince George, and Prince Rupert, as well as one virtual IJC that serves the whole province. Six smaller IJCs are also set to open across BC in 2024, for a total of 15 IJCs.

“We all have heard about the negative impacts of the colonial justice system upon Indigenous people in BC, including their overrepresentation in arrest statistics and in correctional systems. According to BC Corrections, Indigenous people are nearly 6% of the adult population in BC, but comprise 35% of the people in provincial custody,” stated Cedar Dodd, Director of Indigenous Justice Centres at BCFNJC. “Through our network of IJCs, we hope to completely transform Indigenous justice outcomes. Culturally grounded and Indigenous-led, the Vancouver IJC is empowered by the resilience and heart of community – BCFNJC is excited to welcome every person that chooses to walk into such an integral space. We are committed to building relationships with the local communities, Elders, leadership, and social service providers who will help our IJC provide access to cultural supports, practical guidance, and healing in connection with legal services.”

Quick Facts:

- BCFNJC is working to advance Strategy 4 of the *BC First Nations Justice Strategy*, which calls for a network of Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC) in BC that provide culturally safe, welcoming places for Indigenous people to directly access, at the community level, culturally appropriate information, advice, support and representation.
- There are currently 4 physical IJC locations in Merritt, Chilliwack, Prince George, and Prince Rupert, and 1 virtual IJC that serves the whole province
- The 5 new Regional IJCs opening this winter are in Vancouver, Surrey, Kelowna, Nanaimo, and Victoria, and BCFNJC is in the process of working with communities that are interested in hosting one of the six IJCs set to open in 2024. These six smaller IJCs will be opened in other communities across the province and will be shaped by First Nations community input, needs, and infrastructure.
- For more information about the Indigenous Justice Centres, please visit bcfnjc.com/IJCs

About the BCFNJC

In 2016, the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) was created by the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs who together form the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). Guided by a six-person Council, BCFNJC is implementing the unique and comprehensive BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) that outlines 25 individual strategies and 43 lines of action. The organization works in tandem along two tracks of change: reforming the current criminal justice system and restoring traditional Indigenous laws, structures, and healing.

BCFNJC employs 100+ people, has assumed responsibility for Gladue services, expanded a network of nine Indigenous Justice Centres (IJCs) across the province and developed a governance structure that can support the work.

Media Contact**BC First Nations Justice Council**

Natalie Martin (she/her)

Director of Communications

Email: natalie.martin@bcfnjc.com

Direct: 778-795-0582

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