

Below, some of the many wonderful HeroWork volunteers, including Cool Aid's CEO, who are doing a "radical renovation" of our Downtown Community Centre



2021/22 STRATEGIC REPORT CARD

September 2022

Victoria Cool Aid Society acknowledges the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ peoples of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, on whose traditional territories we build homes, lives, and community. HÍSW̱ḴE.

Message from the CEO

To say that the past couple of years have been unique for Cool Aid staff and clients, would be an understatement. I cannot yet say that we have entered a post-pandemic world, but we have reached a certain normality where we can begin to catch our breath and look back on the transformative experience with a bit of clarity and introspection. Out of the challenges we have faced, we have learned a great deal about our values, about who we are, and about how we want to be perceived by our community.

The intersecting crises in affordable housing, COVID-19, and the opioid epidemic spurred us into action. With the support of our partners, Cool Aid's existing infrastructure provided us with the unique opportunity and responsibility to respond. We added urgent new housing to our portfolio, mobilized and expanded our health team to provide vital health and support services out in the community, and extended our reach to care for underserved clients with complex needs.

We are weaving **anti-racism and **decolonization** into all of our work with staff, clients and community.**

I admire the resilience, skill, and dedication of our Cool Aid nurses, housing staff, healthcare workers, cleaning teams, coordinators, and client volunteers, who came together under extremely difficult circumstances and affirmed that we are an undeniable force within our community.

In this 16th Annual Strategic Report Card, we review the first year of our 2021-2024 strategic plan and connect our goals to our achievements to gain clarity on the goals we have yet to accomplish.

As we continue to navigate complex issues, we are encouraged by the possibility of change for the better. Our vision is at the core of our strategic plan, reaffirming our commitment to build a community where housing precarity is a thing of the past. While there are many challenges still ahead of us, we have been working internally to maintain momentum in the areas where we have been successful and working with external sources to identify gaps and improve in the areas where we have room to grow. The two new elements in our strategy map (see next page)—a **foundational statement** and the **Reconciliation** pillar—underscore our commitment to better understand and implement anti-racism, decolonization, and reconciliation across Cool Aid.

We thank our board of directors, funders, partners, and supporters without whose support we could not do the work that we do.



Kathy Stinson
Chief Executive Officer

HOME

HEALTH

COMMUNITY

RECONCILIATION



2021-2024 STRATEGY MAP

Working with our partners in the Capital region, we offer life-changing services to people who are impacted by poverty, colonization, stigma and homelessness.

These services include permanent housing, emergency shelter, health and dental care, employment assistance, and social and recreational opportunities.

Vision ▶ A community where no one is forced to sleep on the street or go hungry and everyone has the dignity that comes with home, health and connection.



FOUNDATION

WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE, AND
CULTURALLY SAFE SPACES AND SERVICES



Our 2021-2024 strategic plan introduced an important new element—a **foundational statement** that is intended to permeate everything that we do, from service delivery and staff-client relations to hiring, staff engagement, and governance. In the strategy map above, the four pillars of the plan, as well as their goals, are firmly rooted in this foundation. So too are our mission, vision, and guiding principles.

Our policies and procedures, client and staff surveys, job descriptions and job postings, annual reports, and more—are being viewed through the lens of **spaces and services** that are **welcoming, inclusive, and culturally safe**.

By embedding the foundational statement in our strategic plan, and by featuring it in our strategy map, we want to demonstrate our commitment to be more supportive of, and more responsive to, the unique challenges faced by staff and clients who identify as Indigenous, Black, People of Colour (BIPOC), and 2SLGBTQ+. We will create physically and psychologically safe environments for people who need housing, healthcare, and other support services. Equally important is the spiritual, social and emotional well-being and safety of our staff.

We fully recognize that this is a lofty and ambitious goal and that the journey toward achieving it will be a long one, extending far beyond the time horizon of our current strategic plan. That is why we are hopeful, knowing that we have begun the journey, *we are* taking those first small steps.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *Meet clients where they are at.*
- *Commit to anti-racism, decolonization, and cultural humility.*
- *Approach each client with empathy.*
- *Practise integrity and mutual respect in all our relationships.*
- *Advocate for those we serve.*

This report identifies some of the steps we are taking to build a more inclusive and diverse organizational culture.



HOME

SUPPORT PEOPLE TO FIND AND MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE HOUSING



SUCCESSFUL TENANCIES IN SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Cool Aid was one of the first organizations in Canada to implement Housing First principles. Since opening Swift House in 1991, we've developed a solid repertoire of strategies to support tenants in maintaining their housing. More than 90% of our supportive housing tenants remain housed for at least one year, a level that has been consistent for the past 10 years.



ADVOCACY AND THE NEED FOR HOUSING FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS

We will continue to proactively advocate for housing and supports for specific vulnerable groups. For example, we have sought funding (unsuccessfully to date) for a women-only housing project. In January 2022, we wrote a letter of support for the Aboriginal Coalition To End Homelessness proposal to build and operate a Healing House in downtown Victoria.



CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT HOUSING AND THE RIGHT SUPPORTS

Matching potential tenants with the appropriate housing involves many parties, many of whom submit applications for their clients through the Coordinated Assessment and Access (CAA) system. Some referring agencies do not have a full understanding of the types of supports offered within supportive housing and, as a result, prospective tenants are sometimes resistant to accepting the supports. To ensure the best matches, additional information needs to be collected during the referral process. Referrers also need to be aware of the importance of maintaining a balance of tenants with different needs within each building.

Cool Aid is working to increase understanding of what supportive housing is, among both referring agencies and prospective tenants, and advocating for the collection of more client data.

TENANT SATISFACTION FEELING "AT HOME"

Feeling "at home" and satisfaction with the home environment are important aspects of maintaining housing stability. We normally survey tenants at several of our buildings every year and ask questions in these areas. We did not undertake any tenant surveys in 2021/22, however. Our 2020 survey was interrupted by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic while our 2021 survey was much broader than usual in terms of number of questions, buildings, and respondents. We are currently reassessing our survey process for housing and shelter clients and anticipate carrying out a survey in early 2023.

ACCELERATING THE HOUSING TURNOVER PROCESS

Some of our buildings are experiencing vacancy issues, either too many empty units or lengthy vacancy periods. Several factors are contributing to this situation, among them, severe damage requiring remediation, supply chain disruptions, overbooked contractors and, perhaps most significant, inappropriate or delayed referrals for prospective tenants.

During 2021/22, we prepared for the implementation of Arcori, a professional property management system that can be customized to meet our needs. Arcori will enable us to gather more nuanced data, respond to work orders faster, and monitor different stages of the housing turnover process. More fulsome property management data will help reduce the time it takes to bring vacant units to "ready to rent" status and the time it takes for new tenants to move in after that.



HOME

SUSTAINABLY MANAGE, GROW AND DIVERSIFY OUR HOUSING



NEW HOUSING NEARING COMPLETION

In Canada, housing is considered to be affordable if it costs less than 30% of a household's before-tax income. The supply of affordable housing in Victoria is so limited that even those with moderate incomes are being financially challenged. People with lower incomes are having to make difficult choices between housing and other needs.

One of the most significant impacts Cool Aid can have on the housing crisis is to create more housing. In 2021/22, we continued with the redevelopment of two mixed-use properties, **210 Gorge** and **Crosstown**. Each property will feature affordable housing, supportive housing, and a variety of commercial uses, including a café that will be Cool Aid's first **social enterprise** venture.



953/959 Balmoral

In partnership with BC Housing, we are developing a 56-unit supportive housing project at this site. Work on the site has already begun.

NEW HOUSING ON THE HORIZON

We anticipate that the five-story modular building at **953/959 Balmoral** will be ready to welcome 56 supportive housing tenants in the spring of 2023. Affordable housing is one of several options we are exploring for **The Mayfair** at 650 Speed Avenue once the temporary tenants have moved out.

We had hoped to acquire two additional properties in 2021/22 but were unsuccessful in our efforts. We will continue to pursue opportunities for suitable sites for supportive and affordable housing in 2022/23.

210 Gorge

Construction is nearly complete, and we are now accepting applications for this new, mixed-use affordable housing building. Of the 72 units, Cool Aid owns 42, including single-occupancy studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, and six wheelchair-accessible units.

BC Housing will take ownership of the remaining 30 studio apartments through the Regional Housing First Program, to be rented at the provincial shelter allowance rate; 21 of these units will be supportive housing with funding from Island Health.



CROSTOWN



3020 Douglas Street & 584 Burnside Road

Phase One will front Burnside Road and accommodate 100 affordable housing units, 54 supportive housing units, and 32,000 square feet of commercial space that includes Cool Aid offices, a Cool Aid community health clinic, a daycare, and a café.

THE MAYFAIR



650 Speed Avenue

Currently, this 23-unit motel serves as temporary housing for tenants waiting for 210 Gorge's completion. We are exploring various options for this building once it is empty,



ENSURE STAFF HAVE THE TRAINING AND RESOURCES THEY NEED



40%

143 out of 356 staff responded

2022 TRAINING AND HEALTH & SAFETY EMPLOYEE SURVEY

In our first in-house employee survey, overall, staff were satisfied with the training currently being offered.

In the many comments staff provided, **more** was a very common sentiment. Mental health, suicide, and substance use/addiction were areas where many wanted to see more in-depth training. Other areas where more substance was wanted—Naloxone, first aid, trauma-informed practice, conflict management, cultural sensitivity, and deescalation.

A number of respondents said they wanted to see more structured and more consistent onboarding and site orientations, two areas where we have already begun to implement changes, with more planned for 2022/23.

PRIORITY & MANDATORY TRAINING IN 2021/22

69

total trainings offered

944

training sessions attended

86%

new employees completing training priorities

378

total employees

- First Aid
- Indigenous Cultural Safety
- Managing Hostile Interactions
- Naloxone
- Recognizing Mental Health Disorders
- Trauma-Informed Practice I
- Trauma-Informed Practice II
- WHIMIS





HEALTH

HELP PEOPLE IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH
AND WELLBEING



2021/22



New clients
attached to
Health Clinic

576



New dental
clients

423



Patient
encounters with
doctors & nurses

45,473



Prescriptions
filled

80,669

BRINGING HEALTHCARE TO WHERE PEOPLE LIVE

In the first year of the pandemic, Cool Aid's medical outreach services rapidly expanded in order to provide much needed healthcare to people living in encampments as well as those being moved from encampments to hotel sheltering sites to protect them from COVID-19. By the end of 2020/21, our Community Health Centre was operating **seven new satellite clinics**, and recorded an unprecedented **152%** increase in medical outreach encounters compared to the previous year (from 7,913 to 19,950).

In 2021/22, the nature of medical outreach changed as most of the people from hotel sheltering sites moved to more permanent accommodations. Even so, the Community Health Centre saw outreach encounters grow by **39%** to 27,810 encounters.



IN A 2022 SURVEY OF
100 CLIENTS LIVING
AT HOTEL SHELTERING
SITES...

87%

said that clinic staff always
welcome them when they
come for care

HEALTHCARE ON THE ROAD

In addition to bringing healthcare to an increasing number of housing, shelter, and other sites, in June 2021, our Community Health Centre launched a mobile outreach service. The fully equipped medical van enables Cool Aid to literally go where people are, even if they have no homes. In the first 10 months of operation, 1,652 nurse and doctor encounters occurred "on the road."

"The Community Health
Centre is working to
eliminate hepatitis C
locally by providing
outreach to people
living in all our buildings
and in other community
partner sites."

EARLY DIAGNOSIS, HARM REDUCTION, AND TREATMENT FOR A RANGE OF CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

People who have lived on the street, in sub-standard housing, in their cars, or on a friend's couch, often have chronic or long-unaddressed medical conditions. Our Community Health Centre has established itself as a leader in integrated inner-city primary healthcare and developed internationally recognized expertise in the prevention, detection, and treatment of **hepatitis C** and **HIV/AIDS** in vulnerable populations.

Recognition

In October 2021, two Cool Aid nurses gave a presentation about our nurse-led hepatitis C program at the **International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users Conference**.

The Health Centre's research manager presented clinic research at the same conference that was published in a special edition of the **International Journal of Drug Policy**.

HIV/AIDS

During 2021/22, the Health Centre administered more than 1,100 HIV antibody tests and treated 211 clients with HIV+ antiretroviral therapy. In addition, 57 clients at high risk of HIV exposure started pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Hepatitis C

The Health Centre administered more than 1,200 HCV antibody tests in 2021/22 and started 104 clients on HCV treatment.

Harm Reduction

Many of the Health Centre's clients have chronic substance use challenges or are recently in recovery. The Centre supports clients to reduce the risks attached to substance use by providing opiate agonist therapy (OAT) and other prescription alternatives.

161 TREATMENTS PROVIDED

115% OF TARGET



PrEP



Hepatitis C

852 CLIENTS TREATED

94% OF TARGET



HIV+
antiretroviral
therapy



Opiate agonist
therapy (OAT)

2,334 TESTS ADMINISTERED

103% OF TARGET



HIV
antibody tests



Hep C
antibody tests



HEALTH

SUSTAINABLY EXPAND AND INTEGRATE HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES



SUPPORTING CLIENT WELLNESS

Closely aligned with the Community Health Centre are a range of client support services that include improving financial stability, providing employment opportunities, and developing employment skills.

Income Benefits—For many people, applying for income benefits is a daunting prospect. In 2021/22, REES staff helped 450+ individuals apply for Canada Pension Plan benefits, Persons with Disabilities benefits, basic income assistance, and other types of income benefits.



161

people found work through the REES Casual Labour Pool

321

individuals provided with employment supports



453

persons helped to apply for disability and other income benefits

Employment Supports—Preparing a résumé, buying steel-toed boots or other work clothes, replacing lost or stolen proof of identity, obtaining copies of credentials—this is just a small sample of the employment supports provided to 321 clients in 2021/22.



Employment—Pre-COVID-19, Cool Aid's **Casual Labour Pool** connected an average of 355 clients a year with companies and individuals needing temporary workers. During the pandemic years, 2020/21 and 2021/22, that average fell to 164 clients.

Almost 170 clients received **honorariums** for their work at our housing sites, on Clean & Safe Teams, or in the Overdose Prevention Unit at Rock Bay Landing.

Our Everyone Deserves to Smile campaign raised

\$75,000+

for clients without financial access to dental services

DENTAL SERVICES FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

As part of our strategic plan, the Community Health Centre's dental clinic is reaching out to specific groups that may be underserved or face barriers to care. Over the next two years, we hope to increase access to dental services for Indigenous clients, new immigrants or refugees, and individuals with disabilities.

541

dental visits by clients from specific populations



IMPROVE WORKPLACE SAFETY AND WELLNESS

FEEDBACK ON HEALTH AND SAFETY FROM OUR 2022 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

In our first in-house employee survey, staff told us that more **wellness resources** and better handling of **threatening or harmful situations** are among their top concerns, as well as more consistent policies and regular communication across housing and shelter sites.

PRIORITIZING STAFF HEALTH AND SAFETY

Housing and shelter providers in Victoria are seeing increased rates and severity of violence, both verbal and physical, from a small segment of the client population. This pattern is also evident at Cool Aid.

Cool Aid's success is inherently linked to our staff's well-being. For staff to thrive while doing the important and difficult work that they do, they need to have an inclusive and safe work environment.

In the second year of our strategic plan (2022/23), we will work to implement several recommendations identified by **Junxion**, an independent consultant who evaluated our organizational capacity and structural health. Their recommendations are further reinforced by feedback from employee survey participants.

STAFF HEALTH & SAFETY PRIORITIES

- Embed **safety** across the organization, supported by ongoing **trauma-informed training**, increased health and safety capacity, and clear definitions and protocols around **critical incidents** like harassment, violence, and conflict resolution.
- Develop an organization-wide definition and mission statement on **reconciliation** and **decolonization**.
- Establish direct lines of **communication** with frontline staff.
- Develop and implement a process for **onboarding** that is consistent across sites, and **site-specific orientations** developed by managers and frontline supervisors.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FROM OUR 2022 EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- We are actively pursuing new **options for the Employee Assistance Program**. Priorities for selecting a new provider—more counselling, wellness supports, resources, and improved response times.
- Sept. 2022—We have formed a facilitated working group, with frontline and management representation, to address staff safety and management consistency in responding to **racism** from clients. The goal is to establish a shared understanding, clarify roles and responsibilities, and reach consensus on responding appropriately.
- Oct. 2022—A new **Respectful Workplace Hotline** will provide staff another avenue if they are experiencing conflict in the workplace, have concerns about a respectful workplace, or are raising a whistleblower complaint.
- Nov. 2022—A town hall on **communication and consistency** will be held.
- Some staff are not aware of all of the **benefits** they have. We are now including information on benefits within the staff newsletter.

COMMUNITY

HELP PEOPLE BUILD ON THEIR STRENGTHS
AND GROW THEIR CONNECTIONS
WITH COMMUNITY



DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE & HEROWORK: A "RADICAL RENOVATION"

Cool Aid's Downtown Community Centre (DCC) is a unique space that, pre-COVID, recorded about 12,000 visitors (2019/20). The only space of its kind regionally, DCC programs support health and wellness for our clients as well as the broader community.

Services like a community kitchen, recreational and arts programming, and low-cost rental space for local groups and organizations have made the DCC a vital resource.

This year, we broke ground on an exciting project three years in the making, thanks to HeroWork.

HeroWork is an organization that does "radical renovations" for non-profits like Cool Aid, helping them achieve their mission more effectively and more beautifully.

By renovating our centre, HeroWork volunteers will reimagine our space's layout, which will uplift the experience of those who use the facility and give us a curb appeal that will welcome many more into our space. These welcome changes are projected to triple our daily program offerings and more than double the number of participants we can accommodate in our activities.

One of the many exciting aspects of this project is the redesign of our **community kitchen**. Prices of essential goods are on the rise daily, and we know that access to good nutritious food means better overall health for those facing poverty or with limited incomes. With an expanded kitchen, newly designed and equipped, we'll be able to offer better food programming and attract more people to join us along the way.

SHELTER INTAKE IN 5 LANGUAGES

A grant from the City of Victoria Participatory Budget initiative enabled Rock Bay Landing to create audio-visual recordings of the intake process in French, Spanish, Tagalog, and Mandarin, with the help of the Inter-Cultural Association. The ICA also translated our guidelines into the same four languages, leaving us with a carry-over balance for "as needed virtual interpretation."

TENANT & CLIENT MEETINGS

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, it was possible to hold a dozen tenant and client meetings during 2021/22. With restrictions lifting, our target for 2022/23 is 56 meetings.



COVID AND COMMUNITY

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the knowledge that connection between us is fundamental to our well-being. And it is our community connections that have been the most impacted by the virus. Tenant meetings, volunteer programs, senior recreation, site tours, fundraising events, and other activities came to a halt or occurred at greatly reduced scale during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Late in 2021/22, we started taking small steps to get back to something resembling "normal" in the new fiscal year, for clients, staff, and community members.

Socially distanced bingo is feasible but not nearly as much fun because fewer people can play.

RECREATIONAL & WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES

For the first time in more than a year, it became possible to arrange for several outings for clients at our seniors buildings.

Programs at the Downtown Community Centre (DCC) experienced numerous starts and stops during 2021/22. Fewer drop-in activities could be offered and some activities required advance registration, both disincentives to client participation.

On the positive side, late in the year, the DCC was able to restart one of its longest-running and most successful programs, **Every Step Counts**, a walking and running program that draws on movement to foster community and confidence. The DCC also introduced **Queer Yoga**, a new program that focuses on creating safe and healing spaces for people who identify as LGBTQ2S+.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

At Rock Bay Landing, our Cultural Services Coordinator launched a monthly **cultural calendar** to help staff plan activities for RBL clients. Since May 2021, the calendar has been circulated to all Cool Aid staff.



COMMUNITY

STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEIGHBOURS, FUNDERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND DONORS



ELEVATING VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer opportunities for community have been virtually nil over the past two years, and we are very much looking forward to welcoming past and new volunteers.

As part of our strategic plan, we are introducing a new **Volunteer Coordinator** position, to be staffed in 2022/23. That person will coordinate and promote volunteer opportunities across Cool Aid, for both clients and community members.

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Video meetings have made it possible to maintain connections with various community groups throughout the pandemic.

Senior Cool Aid leaders participate in monthly meetings of several community associations, including Burnside Gorge, North Park, and Queens/Princess streets, together with housing providers, funders, city representatives, police, and business owners. The purpose of these meetings is to proactively raise and discuss issues of potential concern.



\$2.6M

125% of target

**private
donations
in 2021/22**

CONNECTING WITH DONORS

It has been more than two years since we've been able to host a **donor appreciation event**. During that time, we've focused on enhancing the type of information we send out to donors and supporters.

Our **Homecoming Gala** event again went virtual in 2021/22, raising more than \$160,000 in net proceeds. Our two virtual galas have been so successful that we are reviewing our plans for future events and evaluating how best to use them for donor engagement and fundraising.

STRENGTHEN STAFF ENGAGEMENT



NATSA'MAAT LELUM

This new **equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) committee** is a formal forum in which ideas, initiatives, and concerns related to EDI can be identified and discussed. It is designed to provide all employees with a **voice** on how Cool Aid addresses equity inside the organization and a **safe space** in which concerns can be expressed without fear of judgment or reprisal.

Natsa'maat Lelum was created based on a recommendation from the 2021 ADR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audit. The committee's mandate includes bringing EDI issues to the attention of Cool Aid's leadership.

What's Behind the Name

*Natsa'maat Lelum is Hul'q'umi'num from the Salish Territories of mid-southeastern Vancouver Island. **Natsa'maat** loosely means one house, one mind, one family. It is associated with cohesion of vision and purpose. **Lelum** means house, shelter.*

The idea behind using a Hul'q'umi'num phrase was that ways of being, socialization, are entrenched in our language and, in order to decolonize our thinking, we also need to decolonize our language.



TEAMWORK AND CAMARADERIE

With COVID-19 waning, we are hopeful that 2022/23 will allow for face-to-face **team-building** activities and **social events** for staff outside of work hours. Both team-building and socializing were identified as highly desirable by a number of participants in our Spring 2022 staff survey, as the comment below illustrates.

"Go back to team-building events, where staff can do something fun away from work so we can get to know one another a bit better."

STAFF FEEDBACK, TAKE 2

In our Fall 2022 employee survey, we will invite further feedback on communication, staff connection to supervisors and coworkers, teamwork, and staff engagement.



RECONCILIATION

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL CONNECTIONS



NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Sept. 30, 2021—This special day was commemorated across Cool Aid, through social media, and in posters and other information resources. Below is a sampling of activities.

- Separate staff and client contests focused on "Tell us what **Orange Shirt Day** means to you."
- Food Services menu for the day altered to include Indigenous foods.
- Indigenous music showcased at Rock Bay Landing.
- Barbecue for residents of Rock Bay Landing, with information available about the day.
- Informational posters about the **Every Child Matters** and **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** movements displayed at Rock Bay Landing.
- Also at Rock Bay Landing, an orange shirt and a red dress were hung from a second-floor balcony to show support to the Indigenous community and to demonstrate Cool Aid's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS AT THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Three of Cool Aid's supportive housing sites are located in what we call the **Pandora Block**, which makes our Downtown Community Centre (DCC) a perfect place to hold events for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants who live there as well as for the broader downtown community. For example:

- June 21, 2021—Bison and salmon were among the traditional Indigenous foods served to a safe gathering of Pandora Block tenants to commemorate **National Indigenous Peoples Day**. The Mustard Seed Street Church, Food Share Network, and Discovery Coffee provided many of the ingredients for the meal.
- Since November 2021, the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness has used the DCC to host a bi-weekly **men's healing circle**.



BUILD AND STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL FIRST NATIONS AND URBAN INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

ABORIGINAL COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS (ACEH)

June 24, 2021—Cool Aid's mobile clinic team made their first outreach visit to Spaken House and the Culturally Supportive House, both operated by the ACEH. What followed was the blossoming of a renewed relationship between Cool Aid and the ACEH. The ease of collaboration between organizations has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of healthcare that clients have access to.

Cool Aid has shared all of our operational policies with the Coalition. They, in turn, have agreed to share any "decolonized" policies with us.

VICTORIA NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE (VNFC)

During 2021/22, Cool Aid's Community Health Centre (CHC) continued its work with the VNFC and several communities (see adjacent).

Fall 2021—The CHC obtained approval for a contract for a full-time Indigenous physician who will work under the medical direction of the CHC but report to the Executive Director of the VNFC.

The CHC is working closely with VNFC management to build internal capacity. Over time, the goal is for the VNFC to exercise full responsibility for healthcare delivery to their clients.

The Community Health Centre currently provides healthcare to these First Nations:

**Songhees First Nation
Esquimalt First Nation
Scia'new First Nation
T'souke First Nation
Pacheedaht First Nation**





OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY IS JUST BEGINNING

As defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, **reconciliation** means to establish and maintain a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. For that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, an acknowledgment of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.

Cool Aid has embarked on a journey to make our commitment to reconciliation actionable and meaningful. In our 2021-2024 strategic plan, reconciliation is now the fourth pillar of our mission.

We recognize that **unlearning** colonial beliefs and **eliminating biases** embedded in our culture, systems, policies, and practices are essential to achieving our goals, essential but not easy. To help us in this endeavour, we have sought external expertise to guide us in developing and implementing decolonization and anti-racism initiatives.



ANTI-RACISM, DECOLONIZATION, AND CULTURAL SAFETY

In 2021/22, we began working with **Indigovation** Consulting Inc., who will assist Cool Aid to implement the recommendations from the **ADR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Audit**, in particular, to develop an anti-racism and decolonization strategy that will target and support the entire organization, from the Board of Directors to frontline staff and, eventually, those accessing our services.

This strategy, together with the ADR recommendations on Indigenous cultural safety, will provide Cool Aid with a framework to acknowledge, address, and counter internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism within the organization, and establish expectations and accountability processes that will ultimately benefit and support those who access services.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING

Phase 1—Indigovation conducted a series of Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism workshops for Cool Aid's management, shop stewards, Human Resources staff, and members of Natsa'maat Lelum, our diversity committee. In Phase 2 (2022/23+), this training, which is mandatory, will be extended to all staff.

This learning endeavour is the first step toward developing practices such as cultural humility, anti-racism, and decolonization among Cool Aid's leadership and staff.

EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

One of the recommendations from ADR'S DEI audit was to "implement a **targeted hiring strategy** with associated best practices to enhance employee diversity and promote inclusion." Attracting and retaining more Indigenous staff is particularly important, in order to better reflect and support the significant proportion of Cool Aid clients who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

To help us achieve this goal, we are working with Indigovation to review job descriptions, job postings, interview questions and scoring criteria. Policies related to hiring, recruitment and conflict resolution are also being reviewed through a DEI lens, with support from ADR and Indigovation.

DIRECTOR OF INDIGENOUS RELATIONS AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

September 2022—A new director position will join our senior leadership. The position will support Cool Aid in developing strategies to create culturally safe services and spaces and lasting organizational change.

The new director will also guide us in assessing current goals, shaping new programs, and building mutually respectful relationships with First Nations and Indigenous organizations, peoples, and Elders.

