

# ANNUAL REPORT

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DZE L K'ANT FRIENDSHIP CENTRE  
2020-2021

*Supporting  
our  
community  
through  
COVID-19*



## GOVERNANCE

*The Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre is proud of its organizational structure, and that for over 40 years, this governance model has made our Centre accountable and transparent to its membership and provincial and federal partners.*

### DZE L K'ANT FRIENDSHIP CENTRE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**ANDREW TOM**  
PRESIDENT

**STANLEY NAMOX**  
VICE PRESIDENT

**SUSIE HOOPER**  
SECRETARY/TREASURER

**KRISTAL GRENKIE**  
DIRECTOR

**GUY BROWN**  
DIRECTOR

**JILLIAN DENNIS**  
YOUTH DIRECTOR

# A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Covid 19-pandemic has left us all impacted, some far more than others. For many loss of family, loss of income, employment and food security, for most of us this year has brought isolation and separation from loved ones

I want to honour our volunteer Board of Directors who have led the organization through this unprecedented year. I also want to recognize the incredible contribution of our essential front line workers in each of our locations, Smithers, Dease Lake and Houston. Our entire team, administrative and frontline has kept the services going in the most uncertain and unsafe times, while maintaining and caring for their own homes and families.

I am proud to say that the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre has played a significant role in the communities too ensure that no one was left without.

Our friendship Centre has had to adapt to new ways. We were able to provide financial supports for those who had a change of income due to the pandemic, wellness kits for elderly, youth, and those at high risk of suicide who were in isolation, significant support for our homeless populations, PPE, cleaning items and food hampers for families. We were also able to create kids breakfast programs and offer traditional medicines and counselling support families when they needed it most.

I am very proud of what our team has accomplished and the work is clear in the following report which outlines just some of the many ways our Friendship Centre has risen to the challenges of Covid-19.



**ANNETTE MORGAN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# COVID-19 ANNUAL REPORT



The year 2020-2021 was like no other. The focus for our organization has been to rise to the challenge and support our community through the pandemic. Our services and programs adapted and responded to need in an incredibly rich and meaningful way. This year, our annual report focusses on success stories to illustrate our achievements over the past year.

Because of the amount of supports provided throughout 2020-2021 we cannot report on all of the amazing work of our organization. This report is designed to provide an overview into the many culturally safe supports that the Friendship Centre provided during the pandemic.

# SMITHERS SUCCESS STORIES

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## HOW WE'VE SUPPORTED OUR COMMUNITY

During the pandemic each of our program adapted and responded to the needs of the community. Below are stories of collaboration, hard work and dedication of our staff to serve our community during unprecedented times.



## SMITHERS PROGRAMS

- MENTAL HEALTH & OUTREACH.
- ALCOHOL AND DRUG COUNSELLING.
- HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM.
- HIV AIDS AWARENESS.
- LEGAL ADVOCACY.
- FAMILY GATHERINGS.
- MMIWG FAMILY SUPPORT.
- CAPC (COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN FOR CHILDREN)
- CULTURE IS ALIVE (YOUTH PROGRAM)
- 5X5 EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
- HOLISTIC HEALTH PROGRAM



# MENTAL HEALTH & OUTREACH

## 250 HANDMADE MASKS

Sonia Palmer, Dze L K'ant Mental Health and Outreach Worker, put her exceptional sewing skills to use for the health and safety of our community members during COVID-19.

Using many bright, colourful and beautiful fabrics, Sonia hand sewed over 250 fabric masks to be distributed to the Friendship Centre's clients.

The masks include smaller sizes for children with patterns such as batman, skull and crossbones and floral designs. The masks have been distributed to families, included in care packages and hygiene kits to people who are living without shelter.



## FOOD HAMPERS

The Mental Health and Outreach program provided non-perishable food food hampers for our clients, many of whom are elders and most vulnerable during covid.

The program reduced stress for those that could not afford or go get groceries themselves. The program was able to deliver for those without transportation.

## WELLNESS KITS

In partnership with a grant from United Way of BC, the mental health outreach program coordinated the distribution wellness kits with a wide variety of useful resources including: Kleenex, sanitizer, masks, hand creams, lip balm, cleaning supplies, nail clippers, hygiene items, mini first aid kits etc. These resources were much needed and appreciated by so many community members.

"I feel very fortunate to have received a huge amount groceries. The items the staff picked out were all very useful and timely. I also received a wellness package that again were carefully chosen useful items. With food costs so high this was a timely gift. I so appreciate the help. Misiyh.  
~ Elder.



# YOUTH SUPPORT

## YOUTH COVID FOOD HAMPERS

In 2020 the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre's Culture Is Alive youth program provided over thirty young people, aged 15 to 29, in Smithers and Houston and surrounding areas, with hampers containing non-perishable food items, including breakfast, lunch and dinner options and snacks. The hampers also provided cleaning products, toiletries and laundry supplies. The youth were pleased with the variety of each kit and the support they received from their youth worker.



## COMPUTER ACCESS FOR YOUTH

Youth in Smithers, Houston, Dease Lake and surrounding areas living off reserve were provided with personal computers during the pandemic. Each computer was equipped with a camera and speakers. This technology access program allowed youth to complete homework and engage in home learning programs as well as zoom meetings to access online programming offered at Friendship Centre. Many youth also reported feeling safer and more connected due to the program, with their computers they were able to keep in touch with family and friends despite covid restrictions.



# INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

## Land-based healing workshops (online)

On April 28 and May 12, 2020 the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre held an online trauma informed workshop via zoom. The local Indigenous Trauma Informed Practitioner Sandra Harris via Zoom. Sandra Harris led over 25 participants through a workshop exploring the history of pandemics and Indigenous people in our communities. How our history is carried with us and practical tools for wellness, healing, and remaining grounded during the 'big stress' of the pandemic.



## Bentwood Box making workshops (Online)

Our Culture Is Alive Youth Coordinator enthusiastically embraced this new challenge by finding creative ways to engage youth online. On May 1st, May 8th, and May 13th, we hosted online Bentwood Box Workshops for with eight Indigenous youth aged 14-26 in attendance.

At the workshops my participants had the opportunity to assemble and decorate their own bent wood box, to explore and engage in their culture, and connect with other youth online in a time when youth were feeling extremely isolated. The Youth then enjoyed sharing their painted bentwood boxes on facebook and in doing so, connecting with their extended family and friends.



## Virtual HIV/Aids Awareness Supports

Our HIV/Aids program moved completely online during the pandemic. The goal was to provide up to date information to current clients as well as reach a larger audience. THE HIV/Aids worker was able to provide up to date information about COVID transmission as well as the HIV/Aids and other transmissible diseases via social media posts, information posters and resources.

## Innovations in Alcohol and Drug Counselling

During the pandemic, our drug and alcohol counselling service was moved to phone sessions. Our counsellor provided one-on-one sessions as well as engaging in many zoom group sessions to support clients and build community capacity. The Alcohol and Drug Counsellor has innovated during covid and is now providing support in evenings via phone to meet needs of clients who work. Regular wellness walks in downtown Smithers have allowed outreach support to occur throughout the pandemic. The program is leading the way, in collaboration with Positive Living North, on peer support models for harm reduction and holistic health.



# LEGAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Over the last 18 months, Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre has provided a significant number of legal advocacy services amidst the challenges created during COVID-19.

In our community, the Ministerial Order issued by the Residential Tenancy Branch halted most evictions but once the order was lifted we saw an uptick in evictions and people who needed support with their tenancy issues.

Being available to meet via video, talk over the phone, even meet in person, respecting physical distancing measures, outside the building were all invaluable ways of connecting with our community and being able to support those in need.

We also saw many clients who, facing hardships during the pandemic, needed help to navigate the questions of eligibility and the applications for the various COVID-19 financial supports from both the federal and provincial government. This work made up the majority of our program during the height of the pandemic.

We've found adapting to the "new normal" both physically and emotionally challenging but we remain deeply committed to advocating for our community.

As our community continues to adjust and cope, we remain available to help vulnerable people in need, as well as ever-evolving in our approach to ensure best practices for the community we serve.



**"ARMING PEOPLE WITH KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETIMES  
THE VERY BEST SUPPORT YOU CAN OFFER."**

## FAMILY GATHERINGS PROGRAM

SINCE WE RETURNED FROM THE FIRST WAVE OF COVID- 19 PANDEMIC MID- JUNE, THE FAMILY GATHERING PROGRAM WAS REQUIRED TO CHANGE HOW PROVIDE SERVICES. FROM MEALS IN A JAR TO VIDEO CONFERENCES THROUGH ZOOM AND FACEBOOK ROOMS TOO PRERECORDED VIDEO'S.

WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE AVERAGE OF 6 FAMILIES ATTENDING ACTIVITIES ONLINE. FAVOURITE FOOD ITEMS ARE ALWAYS THE DESSERTS, FAVOURITE CRAFTS ARE DIY KITS, AND FAVOURITE ACTIVES ARE GAMES THAT END WITH A PRIZE FOR THE TOP THREE PLAYERS. WE HAVE A GOOD CORE GROUP OF FAMILIES WHO HAVE STUCK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER THROUGH IT ALL.



## WINTER STORIES OF OLD - A BOOK OF TRADITIONAL STORIES OF FIRST NATIONS SURVIVAL

Winter Stories of Old - Traditional Stories of First Nations Survival

In 2020 we received a Heritage micro- Grant from First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC) to help us produce a book about how local First nations survived during the winter.

This book allowed us to compile stories from three local elders from the community. They told many stories of what they did during the winter to help their families survive when they were children. Once they were finished telling their stories. I was able to quickly write it all out and find a few photos to put together a small 20-page booklet.


We celebrated the printing of the book via a Zoom book launch. On February 25th we had 14 persons in attendance to hear the stories and receive a copy of the booklet. 40 booklets were printed all together. Each program of the Smithers, Houston and Dease Lake locations of the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society all received a few books according to their numbers.

# INDIGENOUS HOUSING SUPPORT FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR AT RISK

*The Indigenous Housing Support Program operates in both Smithers and Houston and all services have focussed on supporting those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness toward greater housing stability.*

Supports provided via this program in 2020-2021 included:

- Food supports (food cards, food hampers, frozen pre-made meals, snacks, access to traditional foods)
- Motel rooms for short-term shelter and those needing to isolate
- Damage deposit and rent in arrears to reduce homelessness
- Traditional medicine (cleansing kits, devils club bracelets, smudge kits)
- Hygiene kits (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shampoo & conditioner)
- home sanitizing/cleaning kits
- Covid-19 prevention kits (masks, gloves, soap, mini sanitizer)
- Phone cards and bus passes
- Winter clothing (winter boots, jackets)
- Showers/laundry access
- Men's haircut/grooming services.



**Over 600 basic needs supports provided during the pandemic in 2020-2021**

## BACKPACK PROGRAM FOR THOSE FACING HOMELESSNESS

Prior to the Christmas holidays, the Indigenous Housing Support Program provided over 30 backpacks to community members in Smithers and Houston who were experiencing street homeless.

Our program staff lovingly packed each backpack full with essential items including: Mini toiletry/hygiene kits, reusable face mask, mini hand sanitizer & wipes, water bottle, thermos, flashlight, non-perishable food kit, wool socks and winter mitts, traditional medicine, a first aid kit and naloxone kit. A stocking stuffer and Santa hat was included with each backpack.



# KIDS BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Early on in the pandemic, it became clear to the Friendship Centre's leadership team that food security was a high priority for families in our community. Seeing the grocery shelves empty was more than unsettling and many were fearing for their ability to feed their families during this time.

The Youth Employment Coordinator coordinated efforts to ensure that over 400 healthy breakfasts can be distributed to families Smithers, Houston and Dease Lake, while ensuring proper social distancing protocols were in place during pick up.

The Friendship Centre's Kid's breakfast program, open to all students from kindergarten to grade 12 in Smithers, Telkwa and Houston, was made possible through a partnership with The Breakfast Club of Canada. Meals were made and packaged locally by Noir Restaurant.

The Friendship Centre's Executive Director, Annette Morgan immediately identified the need for a breakfast program, particularly because many children in our communities utilize the school breakfast program.

"Our goal with the Kid's Breakfast Program is to ensure that students have reliable access to nutritious food even when school was not running due to COVID-19. Providing these healthy frozen pre-made meals, ensures that students are fed and can more easily focus on their studies," Annette explained.





# INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY ONLINE

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## **National Indigenous Peoples Day 2020**

**This year our event was hosted online via zoom and YouTube on June 19, 2021.**

**While we missed being together we were able to do many of the activities we usually do.**

### **Our online event included:**

- **Moose Calling Online Competition**
- **Bannock Making Contest (winner made COVID19 safe bannock on a stick)**
- **Dream Catcher Workshop online/competition**
- **Local performers**
- **Story time for children**

**We wish to acknowledge our Indigenous Peoples Day Committee and staff who worked hard to make the day special for our community despite the pandemic.**



# ORANGE SHIRT DAY

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SEPTEMBER 30, 2020



**Staff ensured that on September 30 2020 Orange Shirt Day was honoured in a covid safe manner during the pandemic.**

**The Friendship Centre's Alcohol and Drug Counsellor, Mental Health Outreach Worker and Program Director collaborated with Muhiem Elementary School to create an Every Child Matters banner. The children and teachers worked with the elders and the Friendship Centre to paint their hand prints on the banner in many colours.**

**The staff then launched the banner with the War Canoe at Lake Kathlyn boat launch. The activities were covered by the Interior news and raised awareness about the impacts of the residential school system and the importance of honouring our residential school survivors.**



# MMIWG MURAL PROJECT

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The goal of this project is to create a mural for the side of the Friendship Centre to commemorate the lives and legacies of local Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls from our community.

Despite COVID-19 we were able to adjust our plans and move this important project forward. Due to COVID-19, we had each family group attend the workshops separately to reduce interaction between people outside of 'family bubbles.' From July 17-19th, we held a weekend of workshops with a different day designated to each participating family. Our staff ensured strict protocols were in place regarding physical distancing, mask-wearing and sanitization.

Our Indigenous Trauma-Informed facilitator, Sandra Harris, led the families through a culturally safe body-centred and land-based healing method. A second counsellor, Judy Wesley, was there for extra support for the families through their healing journey, along with Friendship Centre staff.

Throughout the workshops, the family members opened up their hearts and shared their love for women and girls who they love dearly and whom they wish to ensure are never forgotten. During the workshops, artists were present to observe, listen, as well as discuss with the families the process involved in designing a mural.

Through the process, the artists witnessed how the families wish for their love-ones to be remembered through symbolic representation. The mural will be painted in summer 2021.



# ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS & TRAINING COORDINATOR

**The Essential Life Skills Coordinator is here to support increased Indigenous workforce participation and skills and training in order to obtain transferable skills that respond to the labour needs.**

The Dze L K'ant Friendship has been all hands on deck to meet community needs due to the impact of COVID-19. The program has assisted in getting clients and individuals resources they may need for re-training or re-entering the workforce.

Key resources provided in 2020-2021 fiscal year to respond to unique challenges of the pandemic include , food security, hygiene kits, safety kits, cleaning kits, PPE equipment for personal and work, day planners, backpacks, clipboards, pens, pencils, hi-vis gear, steel toe boots, shoes, socks, underwear, safety glasses, work gloves, laundry soap and obtaining your driver license.

During 2020-2021, due to restrictions and adherence to covid safety plans the program focused on finding opportunities for clients to take training online or safe training opportunities.

The program provides resources on labour market and community resources as well as computers, fax machine and phone accessibility to support resume writing and job searches. Clients who successfully employment are also then able to access proper work and equipment required to do the job safely.





# URBAN INDIGENOUS TEMPORARY PANDEMIC RESPONSE FUND

Through COVID-19 Relief Funding via the National Association of Friendship Centres, the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre created a Temporary Response Fund.

The intention of this fund was to recognize the financial impact of COVID-19 on Urban Indigenous People and support essential needs. Eligible applicants must be Indigenous, Metis or Inuit and currently living off reserve in the communities served by the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre (Smithers, Houston, Telkwa, Dease Lake).

Funds were distributed in 2020-2021 in two rounds of applications. The fund supports three key areas of identified essential need

1. Reducing barriers to accessing government funding and social services supports
2. Health, safety and wellness
3. Basic necessities for families

The Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre was able to reach out to over 200 families through our pandemic response database and social media to identify needs and ensure families in need had access to this financial support.

# MMIWG FAMILY SUPPORT



The Missing & Murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls Program provides family counselling to individuals and family members who are requiring one-on-one, small group sessions. In 2020-2021 this program was offered via phone sessions, zoom as well as regular wellness checks. Activities have included awareness raising and online information sharing and connections.

IMMIWG program has supported families of MMIWG in events such as:

- The Annual Ramona Wilson Walk
- Jessica Patrick Balczer Walk for Justice
- MMIWG Mural Project – participating in zoom meetings and activities with families.

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# FOOD HAMPERS: A COLLABORATION WITH THE OFFICE OF THE WET'SUWET'EN

In collaboration with the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, the Friendship Centre was able to provide hundreds of off reserve members with large food hampers. This collaboration was led by our 5x5 Employment Officer. This work involved significant outreach to ensure that hampers were available to all families in need. This was a very positive collaborative and community effort and was much appreciated by members.



# HOUSTON SUCCESS STORIES

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## HOW WE'VE SUPPORTED OUR COMMUNITY IN HOUSTON

The Houston Friendship Centre serves many young families and their children from early years through to young adults. The pandemic required significant shifts to ensure families were supported during an extremely difficult time. Below are stories from our dedicated team in Houston, who went above and beyond during the pandemic.



## HOUSTON PROGRAMS

- ABORIGINAL FAMILY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR >>
- AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM (ASP)
- CONNECTIONS PROJECT
- EARLY YEARS CENTRE
- MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLOR
- HOUSTON PREGNANCY OUTREACH PROGRAM (POP)



## RESPONDING AND ADAPTING DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the pandemic, we have seen an increased need to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, personal protective equipment and technology supports. Mental health needs have also increased significantly. The following are some examples of how the Dze L K' ant Friendship Centre in Houston, with supports from various grants and funders met those challenges, supported clients and improved outcomes.

The Houston office have continued to offer programs with little or no interruption through a remote service delivery during the past year.

During this time team leads continue to connect with their clients through phone, messenger and face book. We have redesigned each face book program page to allow an interactive service model which includes online workshops, group chats, and group programming. Each week clients are invited to pick up a program kit through a contactless pick up point and join in group sessions virtually, led by the program coordinator. This delivery has helped clients socialize and still feel connected in a safe space.



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The Dze L ' K ant Friendship Centre received Funding through BC Aboriginal Child Care Society for emergency Covid - 19 supports. The funding allowed us to purchase and distribute the following essential items for rural Off Reserve Indigenous families.

- Over 50 Hygiene kits
- Over 50 "covid prevention kits "which included personal PPE, and home cleaning kits.
- \$2,000 of phone card Minutes and distributed to families. clients can make appointments with their medical providers etc.
- healthy food hampers
- 30 families were provided with winter jackets and boots for their children.
- Diapers, formula and essential baby items.
- Interactive wellness and cultural DIY kits to take home.

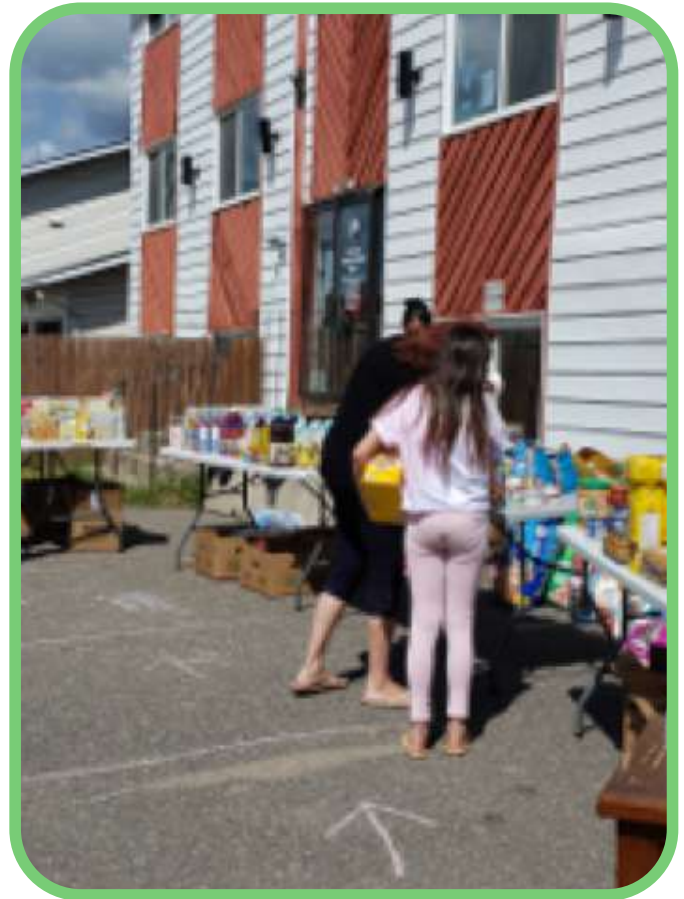
## BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Covid Support Breakfast Program. As a result of school closers and many families relying on the breakfast and lunch programs, the Dze I K' ant Friendship Centre partnered with the breakfast club of Canada and distributed over 75 Pre-made meals to little tummies during School closures. Families picked up their pre- made meals through a contactless pick up area each morning.



## FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

Over 100 food hampers have been distributed through funds received by the youth leadership of British Columbia and Buy- Low Foods, and Witset Band. The goal was to provide Covid- 19 relief to a demographic that was being missed by mainstream government funding. Rural Indigenous youth was the projects targeted demographic serving individuals that were heavily impacted by loss of employment and social setbacks.



# STRONG INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS PROJECT (ONLINE)

The Houston office received funding from the ministers advisory Council on Indigenous women to facilitate a program to increase capacity in the Houston area to reduce gender-based violence. In response we developed a 12 week support program that met via zoom each week and women are invited to participate in various activities and workshops to strengthen and support our Indigenous women and girls in our community to become stronger and more confident in their abilities to live safe and holistically healthy lives. Workshops Included:

- Traditional Medicines and smudge workshop facilitated by Charrine Lace
- Balance and finding strength facilitated by Sandra Harris
- Art therapy sessions
- Self-Care and mental Health support facilitated by mental health
- Sharing circle led by community Elders
- Drumming workshop
- Pound fitness sessions

The program has been well received by participants expressing the positive impacts support from other women have in their life. This project was introduced at a very critical time of increased stress and vulnerabilities for our Indigenous Women. Women have began opening up and sharing their stories and experiences, allowing space for healing and change.





## CHRISTMAS HAMPER INITIATIVE

Christmas this year proved to be especially challenging for clients as they were not able to travel to be with loved ones, afford festive food and gifts, and demand created wait lists for salvation Army Christmas hampers.

As a response, The Houston Office organized a Christmas hamper initiative to replace the annual Christmas Community luncheon that we usually provide each year.

With the help from generous support from our community businesses we were able to provide over 30 families with Christmas hampers filled with a Christmas dinner, and nonperishable food items, Self-care items, small age appropriate gifts, winter gear, and gift vouchers.

We also provided over a dozen Seniors gifts. Priority was given to families and clients that missed the Deadline for the salvation Army Food hampers.

We received an overwhelming response of gratitude from families expressing that the initiative helped alleviate stress and helped provide a brighter Christmas.





# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR COVID SUPPORT FUNDERS

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COVID-19 Specific funding in 2020-2021 was received from the following:

- NAFC
- BCAAFC
- Breakfast Club of Canada
- Lu'ma Native Housing
- BC Aboriginol Childcare Society
- Emergency Community Support Fund
- United Way Northern BC
- New Horizons
- Red Cross

*WE THANK ALL OF OUR FUNDERS WHO SUPPORTED US DURING 2020-2021.*



## ACKNOWLEDGING OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DURING COVID

- Office of the Wet'suwet'en
- Witset First Nation
- Positive Living North
- Salvation Army
- Noir Restaurant
- Sullivan's Motor Products
- Rotary Club of Smithers
- Nature's Pantry
- Subway Smithers
- Smokescreen Printing
- Canfor
- Dungate Community Forest
- Co-op Fuels
- Chamber Of commerce.
- Houston Food Market
- Pawsome Adventures
- Buy- Low Foods
- The Houston Leisure facility.
- P.A.P.C Pharma save

# OUR CULTURAL APPROACH TO ONGOING COVID-19 SUPPORT

The pandemic has created isolation, mental and physical health challenges, loss and great economic hardship to many.

We will continue to honour these challenges in our community by seeking funding and ensuring services are delivered as needed.

We look forward to face-to-face workshops, sharing meals and bringing people together again when it is safe to do so. Until that time we continue to prioritize safety of our staff and community members we serve.

Our focus for 2021-2022 is on holistic health and wellness, in particular mental health, healing and resilience.

