



**BC First Nations Justice Council Opens an *Indigenous Diversion Centre* on Lheidli T'enneh territory (Prince George, BC)**

*Funded by Public Safety Canada, this first-of-its-kind centre aims to decrease Indigenous representation in jails, break harmful cycles of reoffending and help Indigenous people access culturally appropriate supports and resources.*

**Lheidli T'enneh Territory, Prince George, BC:** The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) opens the doors to the Indigenous Diversion Centre (IDC) on Lheidli T'enneh territory, commonly known as Prince George. The IDC is the first of its kind in Canada, hosting an innovative pilot program that will divert Indigenous people from criminal justice system involvement and instead offer pathways to accountability, healing and support.

“Standing up BC's first Indigenous Diversion Centre, in Lheidli T'enneh territory, is a milestone achievement in the advancement of Indigenous-led justice reform. The BC First Nations Justice Strategy, under Strategy 1, has a presumption of diversion as a core justice value that can break harmful cycles, decrease Indigenous representation in jails, and help Indigenous people access culturally appropriate supports and resources. We hold up First Nations and Indigenous communities, the justice partners, and the collaborators for supporting a clear pathway to this work. Our team is dedicated and ready to work hard to realize the success of these programs.”—Kory Wilson (Hemas Kla-Lee-Lee-Kla), Chair, BC First Nations Justice Council

With financial support offered through Public Safety Canada's Northern and Indigenous Crime Prevention Fund (NICPF), the IDC now offers a post-release diversion program that follows an indigenous ceremonial modality that focuses on the root causes of offending by providing a caring cultural environment where true rehabilitation and healing can occur. The IDC houses a trauma-informed multidisciplinary team of dedicated professionals who will support IDC participants in conflict with the law avoid the revolving-door of arrest, prosecution and incarceration.

The IDC serves First Nations, Métis and Inuit adults residing in Prince George in two streams:

**Post-Release Diversion Program**

Individuals who are released from a correctional centre can struggle to reintegrate, without dedicated supports and a sense of belonging. Indigenous adults who are leaving Provincial and Federal correctional facilities and have plans to reside in Prince George are welcome at the Centre to access our wide range of services and supports. *The post-release program is now open.*

**Pre-Charge Diversion Program (coming soon)**

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In partnership with Prince George RCMP, the program will divert Indigenous people from being charged with an eligible offence and instead offer enrollment in the program. The staff will develop an individualized 90-day Diversion Plan where participants commit to a set of activities in order to have their charges dropped. Working with a dedicated social worker, participants can advance their long-term healing goals beyond the 90 days. *The pre-charge diversion program will open in the Fall of 2025.*

### **Indigenous Diversion Centre Activities Include:**

- Ceremony
- Long Term Care Coordination
- Clinical Counselling
- Community Partner Workshops
- Sacred Bundle Journey
- Seasonal Camps
- Land Based Activities
- 'Atsoo's (Grandmother's) Kitchen
- Adulting 101
- Cultural Activities
- Therapeutic Art Group

The Indigenous Diversion Centre is located at 1475 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Prince George, BC. More information can be found online [here](#).

While the centre is now open with the post-release program running, IDC staff are planning for a formal grand opening, with a community open house in the Fall of 2025 to coincide with the launch of the Pre-Charge Diversion Program.

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### **Quick Facts**

- BCFNJC is a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety of the City of Prince George, along with the RCMP the Mayor, and select community partners. The purpose of the Committee is to undertake observation on crime and to explore solutions through tested best practices learned from local and other jurisdictions to address the significant public safety issues facing Prince George, especially the downtown core.
- Strategy 1 of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy, developed in collaboration between the 204 First Nations of BC and the Province, aims to embed the presumption of diversion at every step of the justice system. Diversion is the key to reducing the overincarceration crisis of Indigenous people through community-based alternatives to the justice system.
- The Prince George Regional Correctional Centre is currently overcapacity, with 63% of inmates identifying as Indigenous.
- Public Safety Canada's Northern and Indigenous Crime Prevention Fund (NICPF) supports the adaptation, development, implementation and

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evaluation of innovative and promising culturally sensitive crime prevention practices and promotes community safety approaches in Indigenous communities both on and off-reserve and in the North.

- The Lheidli T'enneh are the original caretakers of their lands, waterways and people, and their territory is home to a vibrant urban Indigenous community from many parts of BC and Canada.
- In BC, one in five interactions with police involve someone with a mental-health disorder.

### **ABOUT THE BCFNJC**

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). BCFNJC represents BC First Nations on justice-related issues to bring about transformative change to the legal system. BCFNJC is guided by the unique and comprehensive BC First Nations Justice Strategy (the Strategy) which was jointly developed by the BC First Nations Justice Council, BC First Nations communities and the Province of British Columbia. The Strategy advances 25 individual strategies along two tracks of change: reforming the current criminal justice system and restoring Indigenous justice systems, legal traditions, and structures.

Today, BCFNJC is an expanding non-profit organization guided by the vision and voices of Indigenous leadership, including our Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Our team members, who have diverse professional, cultural, and community expertise are working hard to implement the Justice Strategy and advance Indigenous self-determination over justice. With the direction and support of First Nations communities, work will continue to transform the mainstream colonial justice system and champion innovative, Indigenous-led justice solutions. Visit [Tracking Justice](#) for more information.

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