



For Immediate Release  
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## **The BC First Nations Justice Council Announces the Locations of 6 New Indigenous Justice Centres in BC**

*More Indigenous people have access to community-based spaces and free, culturally safe legal services with the opening of six new Indigenous Justice Centres by the end of the year.*

**Okanagan syilx Homelands, Westbank BC:** The BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) is excited to announce that it has been working with First Nations to open new Indigenous Justice Centres (IJC), by December 2024, in the following locations: Burns Lake, Hazelton, Williams Lake, Kamloops, Cranbrook, and Port Hardy

[Strategy 4](#) of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy calls for a network of IJCs in BC that provide culturally safe, welcoming places for Indigenous people to directly access, in community, culturally appropriate justice services, including legal advice and representation for criminal justice and child protection matters.

“Expanding the network of IJCs across the province is a powerful undertaking that will ensure Indigenous people have the services they need to not only navigate a complex, often discriminatory justice system. The IJCS support Indigenous people to remain connected to their community and traditional ways of healing and justice,” stated Kory Wilson, BCFNJC Chair. “These new IJCs were designed in partnership with the local First Nations and Indigenous communities in Burns Lake, Hazelton, Williams Lake, Kamloops, Cranbrook, and Port Hardy with the goal of enveloping Indigenous people with care, respect, and understanding as they navigate the justice system. Our teams of IJC lawyers, resource and support workers, Elders, and Aunties are there to support First Nations and their community members in their justice journeys, every step of the way.”

In expanding our network of IJCs across the province is a powerful, significant undertaking, and BCFNJC has been committed to ensuring that next six IJC locations were selected with the leadership, guidance, and engagement of First Nations. All 204 First Nations in BC were invited to express interest in working with BCFNJC staff to develop a business case for an IJC on its homelands. BCFNJC approved the site locations based on expressions of interest from First Nations, research into demographic patterns, legal aid applications, and court and circuit court locations and needs. BCFNJC has been engaging directly with community and meeting with First Nations leadership, Métis organizations, and Indigenous community members to ensure their knowledge and insights into their communities’ needs and strengths were reflected in the IJCs.

With the support of the Province of British Columbia, BCFNJC will have 15 IJCs by December 2024. Since Premier Eby's [announcement](#) on November 20, 2022, that the Province will invest in the establishment and long-term operation of new IJCs, BCFNJC has opened a total of nine IJCs in Merritt, Chilliwack, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Vancouver, Surrey, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Kelowna. The next six IJCs will bring the total number of physical IJCs in the province to 15 before the end of 2024. With over 70 IJC staff members across the nine existing IJCs, and another 30 being hired into these new IJCs, BCFNJC is serving hundreds of Indigenous people and have seen an increased demand for services. Legal teams are actively supporting clients and providing criminal law and child protection legal services, and wraparound supports for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

### **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 a dynamic, expanding non-profit organization that is making a powerful, enduring mark on the justice landscape. Guided by the vision and voices of Indigenous leadership, including our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, we employ over 150 people with diverse professional, cultural, and community expertise who 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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