



For People.
For Communities.

DIVERSECITY
community resources society

Building stronger communities *together*

Impact Report 2024–2025

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ON THE COVER

(Front) A young participant full of wonder, taking part in our LINC end-of-year celebration.

(Back) Tarana Kaur, Seniors Program Coordinator, shared her love for DIVERSEcity at our 2025 DIVERSEcity x Minerva Women's Leadership Forum.

Our work takes place ...

On the ancestral, traditional and unceded territories of the SEMYOME (Semiahmoo), qícəy̓ (Katzie), kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem), q̓ʷa:n̓lən̓ (Kwantlen), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and the s̓cəwaθən məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen) First Nations. The knowledge, traditions and ongoing contributions of these communities are significant in providing context to the work we do, and DIVERSEcity recognizes the importance that reconciliation has in building connected, stronger and healthier communities.

Photo: Vegetables growing in DIVERSEcity's community garden.



Upkar Singh Tatlay
CHAIR



Neelam Sahota
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Message from the Chair & CEO

Opportunity is never created in isolation — it is built in community.

At DIVERSEcity, we have the power to do more than deliver programs and services. We can reimagine what immigrant and refugee support looks like in this country. We can shape systems. We can advance progress and change for all British Columbians. And we can do this by elevating different voices and exploring innovative solutions, building a better Canada in the process.

Over the years, we have seen tremendous organizational growth at DIVERSEcity. We have tripled our operating budget, doubled our team and expanded our reach into new areas of social impact. More recently, however, we have faced funding reductions. But success is not measured only by size — it is measured by the difference we make and the trust we build with our communities as we lead with purpose.

Leadership for us starts in the boardroom. Governance isn't a checkbox exercise — it should be a reflection of the community we serve. That's why we have worked to build a board that values lived experience, cultural fluency and deep community roots. They understand the human implications behind the numbers and are involved in strategic dialogue.

Leadership also requires that we listen. Our frontline teams are diverse and hold invaluable knowledge. They know what works, where gaps exist, and how we can adapt in real time.

With needs growing more complex in our communities, there is a temptation to simply do more.

But we must do better, not just bigger. This moment in time calls for deep collaboration across sectors, between non-profits, governments, funders and businesses to build a thriving country for everyone. None of us can do this alone.

In the pages of this year's *Impact Report*, you'll see just a small glimpse of the accomplishments and social impact we, at DIVERSEcity, along with our partners, have had on people as we strive to build connected, stronger and healthier communities.

As we move forward with DIVERSEcity's five-year strategic plan, we will continue to not only help, but to stand alongside the people we serve to build something new, something better. Because building a better Canada doesn't start and stop in Parliament or boardrooms. It begins in community — with trust, with vision and with inclusion.

Upkar Singh Tatlay

Neelam Sahota

We are guided by purpose and focused on impact

VISION

An inclusive, equitable and regenerative society that puts people and the planet first.

MISSION

Together, we build connected, stronger and healthier communities.



Photos: (Top row) DIVERSEcity's annual Bundle Up campaign collected and distributed coats, gloves and hats to 200+ refugee and immigrant clients this year. Our Together Against Hate Forum ignited dialogue on anti-racism. (Bottom row) Growing connections and fresh produce at DIVERSEcity's Hazelnut Meadows Community Garden. Attendees share a moment of connection at the DIVERSEcity X Minerva Women's Leadership Forum in March 2025. Former Poet Laureate of New Westminster Elliott Slinn performed a piece on the art of representation at our Black in BC event in February 2025.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024–2025



Upkar Singh Tatlay
CHAIR



Susan Wells
VICE CHAIR



Kam K. Raman
SECRETARY



Sonia Parmar
TREASURER



Amy Gill
DIRECTOR AT LARGE



Jason Wong
DIRECTOR AT LARGE



James Delorme
SPECIAL ADVISOR

100%

BIPOC representation
on the Board, reflecting
the communities
DIVERSEcity serves

EXECUTIVE TEAM



Neelam Sahota
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**



Ian Robinson
**CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER**



Vandna Joshi
DIRECTOR
LANGUAGE, EMPLOYMENT &
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

86%

women leaders on the
Executive Team with
77% on the full
management team



Lenya Wilks
DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY INCLUSION,
HEALTH & EQUITY



Praneet Sandhu
DIRECTOR
PEOPLE & CULTURE



Rachna Katariya
DIRECTOR
FINANCE



Meheret Bisrat
DIRECTOR
SETTLEMENT & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT

Impact at a Glance

How do we measure the impact we make as a community services organization?

Is it in the numbers of people served, the amount and variety of our programs and services, or the milestones people reach with our support? It's in all those ways, measured in data, stories and the thank yous that DIVERSEcity staff receive every day for the help, resources and training we provide. We are their guide as they navigate systems, overcome challenges and build the lives they want, creating a stronger community for all.

People we served

Immigration status



44%

permanent residents

41%

non-permanent residents

9%

naturalized citizens

6%

Canadian citizens and Indigenous people

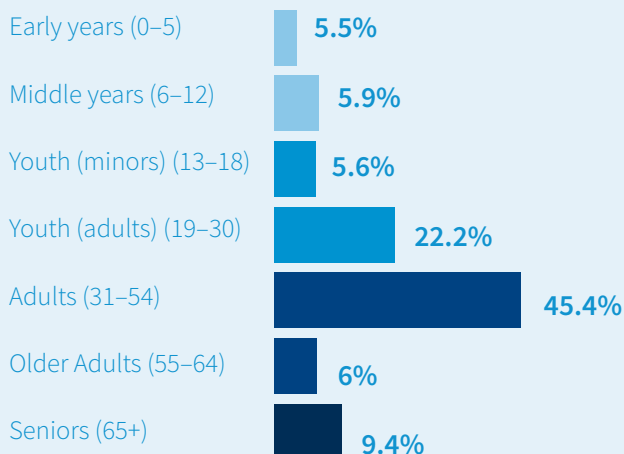
93%

of the people we served are born in another country.

Top 10 countries of origin & languages

India	Punjabi
Afghanistan	Arabic
Syria	Dari
Canada	Spanish
China	Pashto
South Korea	English
Colombia	Hindi
Eritrea	Mandarin
Pakistan	Swahili
Mexico	Ukrainian

Helping people of all ages



Clients identify as:

47% female **34%** male **19%** other

Support we shared

Most accessed services

Settlement Services

Safe Haven

BC Newcomer Services

LINC

Volunteer Program

Top 5 programs referred within DIVERSEcity

Volunteer Program

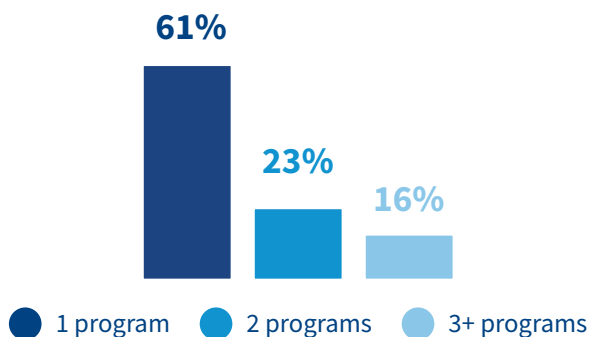
Better at Home

H.E.A.L. for Work

TAPS Program

Citizenship Program

Clients participated in:



79%
one-on-one services

21%
group sessions

**DIVERSEcity is
here for people and
for communities.
We are here for
*you!***



Jasprit Singh, Senior Manager,
Finance, helping us celebrate
changemakers at the 2024
DIVERSEcity Awards of Impact.

Settlement & Community Development

A journey of support and belonging

As we, at DIVERSEcity, welcome people from around the world, our **Settlement and Community Development** and **Safe Haven** teams are usually the first stop in their journey. In fact, Settlement Services, the Safe Haven program and BC Newcomer Services Program are our top three accessed services at DIVERSEcity, helping people build the life they want in Canada.

We connect permanent residents and refugees as well as temporary residents, international students, refugee claimants and asylum seekers to essentials like housing, schooling, health care, employment programs and language classes. Where needs are more complex,

we provide tailored case management and mental health support, namely through the Refugee and Immigrant Specialized Experience (RISE) Program.

It's our wraparound approach that supports newcomers throughout their entire resettlement journey. We listen with open hearts and minds to understand their needs and connect them to programs that encourage community connection and wellbeing for the whole family — from children and youth to seniors, as well as LGBTQ+ newcomers. Our impact is seen in their daily lives as they become more confident, connected and integrated, many becoming citizens, too!



“

“It has been my pleasure to have a great learning experience in your kind and thoughtful guidance. I highly appreciate your sense of co-operation and services you rendered.”

— LAKHVIR, A 60-YEAR-OLD SAFE HAVEN CLIENT WHO GOT A JOB AT A NURSERY AFTER ATTENDING WORKSHOPS AND RECEIVING RESUMÉ SUPPORT

Photos: (Above) Families enjoyed an enriching day at A Rocha BC Centre, learning about nature and sustainability. Photo by Madison Fisher. (Below) Seniors cooking healthy food and nurturing friendships in our community kitchen.

3,398

newcomers

received settlement services; **69%** were permanent residents and **31%** were non-permanent residents and naturalized citizens; **421** were refugees supported through the RISE Program

1,400

refugee claimants

and other humanitarian newcomers were helped through our Safe Haven program, **326** of whom were supported through the refugee claims submission process

20,910

services delivered

to **1,300** seniors, **50%** of whom are aged 75+

85

Safe Haven clients

found a job with our help, **121** accessed English language classes and **363** accessed housing support

Proud to be Canadian

Immigrating to Canada in 2018 from Pakistan, Khadija and her family were following a dream. There were some difficulties along the way, adjusting to a new way of life and planting roots in unfamiliar soil. With three children, Khadija joined some of DIVERSEcity's child and family programs including HIPPPY.

Later, she joined our Canadian Citizenship Preparation and Civic Engagement Course to help her prepare for her citizenship test and make connections in her new community.

"Becoming a Canadian citizen has been a long journey for me," Khadija says. "I had never imagined in my life that I would become a Canadian citizen. It is a mixed feeling."

When she first came to Canada, she was not even sure that she would stay because of the intense culture shock. She says she and her family had to make a lot

of adjustments to their new lifestyle. But, today, she's happy they chose Canada.

"I'm very happy for myself and my family," she says. "I would like to thank DIVERSEcity for helping me achieve this dream and for helping me at every stage of this journey."

Seven years after arriving in Canada, Khadija is not only a citizen, but gives back as a DIVERSEcity volunteer. She says it's important "to help others" the way she was helped. A full circle moment. ❤️



Hear Khadija in her own words in this video.

Employment & Language

Building meaningful lives and careers

Everyone deserves the opportunity to improve their lives, be self-sufficient and find meaningful work. But too many youth, newcomers and multi-barriered adults keep facing barriers to the labour market that are hard to overcome.

By helping people improve their English language skills, upgrade their education, advance their career skills, learn how to navigate their job search or start a small business, DIVERSEcity supports people to find

meaningful career paths, despite barriers that may be standing in the way of their goals — from trauma to mental health to discrimination. Through our **Employment Programs** for youth and multi-barriered adults, **Diverse Entrepreneurs Business Incubator** as well as **English Language Programs** for permanent residents, namely Language Instruction for Newcomers in Canada (LINC), we are helping create diverse and dynamic communities and workplaces.

230

employment program
participants

100%

program completion rate
across all Youth Employment and
Supported Employment programs

92%

of SAHARA participants

found employment, as did **100%**
of Future Troopers and **65%** of
Future Leaders participants

97

diverse entrepreneurs

launched a business through the
Diverse Entrepreneurs Business
Incubator



664

students

in **30** Language Instruction for Newcomers in Canada (LINC) English classes per week, plus **72** in weekly conversation circles

65%

of LINC students

graduated successfully from their CLB level; students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the services provided and teachers' clarity and patience, as well as the sense of belonging — "It feels like home"

81

children of LINC students

supported through our early childhood education program with parents claiming they were "amazed at how quickly they were picking up the language"



Dentist dreams

For Hrdish Chhabra, a young dentist from India who immigrated to Canada in 2019, the path to practising in Canada was steep — financially, mentally and emotionally.

After moving to Vancouver to complete his master's in global health administration, he still felt the pull back to dentistry. "Getting licensed here is a long road," he says. "The exams are extremely expensive, difficult and time-consuming — I had to reduce my work hours to make time to study."

During his journey back to dentistry, he passed the first two licensing exams, but the final one required a high fee for a preparation course and equipment — a daunting cost for someone trying to work, study and make a life in a new country.

That's when a friend told him about DIVERSEcity's Future Troopers youth employment program. "I filled out the form online and that's when I met employment specialist, Rajwant," he shares. "She was very welcoming and walked me through the process — guiding me every step along the way."

With the support of Future Troopers, Hrdish received the funding needed for training as well as essential dental equipment and materials. That help made all the difference — he recently passed his third exam and is just months away from obtaining his full licence.

"I'm so grateful. Without this support I wouldn't have made it. It gave me the courage, confidence and ability to keep going — it helped me achieve my dream."

Today, Hrdish has renewed hope for his future and a message for others on the same path: "If you want to upgrade your skills to reach your goals, don't hesitate. Ask for help. It can change your life." ❤️

Families & Wellbeing

Healthier families and communities

Your family and home shape the way you feel and experience the world. Through our **Child and Family Programs**, we support parents and children overcoming trauma and challenges by creating empowering spaces for them to learn and thrive, together.

This approach is also reflected in our **Mental Health and Substance Use Services** and **Gender-Based Violence Services**, guided by our culturally safe, trauma-informed **Roots of Safety** planning framework, which was recently named as a best practice by Pathways to Prosperity.

We promote equity and empowerment throughout the counselling process, an approach that has proven to help foster trust, reduce shame and improve engagement. Clients reported they feel “respected,” “seen” and “valued” and expressed the programs had given them “hope” and “direction.”

With the ever-increasing diversity in the local population — many of whom are overcoming deeply rooted fear, mistrust and emotional distress — demand continues to outpace the availability of linguistically appropriate services for their wellbeing.



“

“You realize you’re not the only one going through the challenges and joys of parenting.”

— ELSA, A NEWCOMER MOTHER FROM ERITREA



Watch a video with Elsa and two other newcomer mothers sharing their stories here.

400+

families helped

who came from Syria, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uganda and Türkiye, and needed help in navigating Canadian systems while supporting their children's development through our child and family programs

1K+

children supported

through programs such as HIPPY, IMPACT and the now defunded Family First, supporting their literacy, school readiness, emotional wellbeing and more

106

women empowered

through our Stopping the Violence services in Dari, Farsi, Punjabi, Hindi, Arabic and Spanish; **90%** reported they were not comfortable using English, and our services helped them feel empowered, less isolated and more confident in navigating systems and asserting their rights

381

people helped

through our culturally informed Substance Use Services with **70%** stating they are not comfortable with mainstream services; our services have a **six-month** waiting list!

Silence to healing

For eight-year-old Clara (name changed for privacy), silence became her shield. After the sudden loss of her father to a toxic combination of substance use, grief left her quiet and withdrawn — hesitant to speak, hesitant to play and hesitant to trust. At school, she often sat alone, unable to connect with her peers, weighed down by a pain too big for words.

Through DIVERSEcity's Child and Youth Mental Health Counselling program, clinical counsellor Gisèle welcomed Clara into a gentle, healing space. Through art and play therapy, Clara found the ability to express her emotions — painting her sadness, drumming her anger and giggling in therapeutic games that slowly built connection. Over time, Clara began to name her feelings: "I'm sad. I'm scared."

As Clara's confidence grew, so did her world. She joined the music club at school. She tried new activities like skateboarding for the first time as her grief made

room for curiosity and playfulness. Sleepovers with friends became fun, not frightening.

Gisèle also worked closely with Clara's mother through psychoeducation and grief support, helping her find clear, compassionate and age-appropriate language to speak openly with Clara and her older sibling. Together, they created a home where emotions were now named, heard and held.

By the end of counselling, her family was no longer just surviving; they were moving forward together, connected with strength and openness.

Because healing, as Gisèle shares, "is relational. It requires the people closest to the child to listen, to change and to create a safe emotional climate where the child's new skills can take root, allowing them to heal and move on." ❤️



Partnerships & Equity

Collaborating to build a better BC

Building stronger communities can't be done alone. The work we do at DIVERSEcity to improve immigrant outcomes and create a healthier society is done in union with our community partners.

In our continued leadership of **Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)**, we bring 35+ council members as well as various advisory tables together to create inclusive opportunities for newcomers, youth, employers and more, all outlined in an ambitious five-year Community Plan.

A similar partnership approach is the focus of our **Collective, Advocacy, Rights and Education (C.A.R.E.) for Migrant Workers** program, which works with 10 migrant worker organizations to advocate, educate and create connection for migrant workers in BC.

We concluded our **B.U.I.L.D.S. Program**, supporting grassroots BIPOC organizations in the South Fraser in expanding their funding, services and impact. Based on the successful outcomes, we are now taking this work across the province through BUILD BC-Yukon.

15K+

migrant workers

were reached through group rights sessions, **6,500** attended community events and **7,300** benefited from one-on-one case management

2K+

migrant workers

took free English classes with a focus on learning about their rights as workers

15

grassroots organizations

were formally supported through the B.U.I.L.D.S. Program, **58%** of which submitted funding proposals to IRCC's 2024 call for proposals

71%

of B.U.I.L.D.S. participants

were "very satisfied" and **29%** were "satisfied" with the program overall



Photo: The Surrey LIP's second annual Stories from the Land event, supported by knowledge keepers from Kwantlen First Nation, provided an opportunity for Surrey newcomers to learn about Indigenous history and culture.



Power in stories

Storytelling has become one of the most important tools for showing impact and results today. The Surrey LIP's Stories of Impact video storytelling series accomplished just that.

The series welcomed newcomers to share their journeys, challenges and triumphs, offering a look at the harsh realities they face in immigrating and how they overcame them.

In partnership with Library Champions and Surrey Libraries, these documentary-style videos focused on five newcomers to Surrey, BC, two of whom were clients of DIVERSEcity. Each bravely told their stories of resilience and perseverance, explaining how they found

success and belonging, while making the community of Surrey a richer, more inclusive place.

There's Rashi from India, who faced the all-too-common employment barriers immigrants endure. And Moqadas, a journalist from Afghanistan, who fled to Canada for safety.

The series also featured Tayo, a dentist from Nigeria, who restarted his career from scratch and is now a proud Canadian citizen. Erika, a teacher from Colombia, overcame both language barriers and a cancer diagnosis to rebuild her life here. And Daniel, from Chile, came to pursue better opportunities and has become a food security champion in Canada. ❤️



[Watch all their stories here!](#)

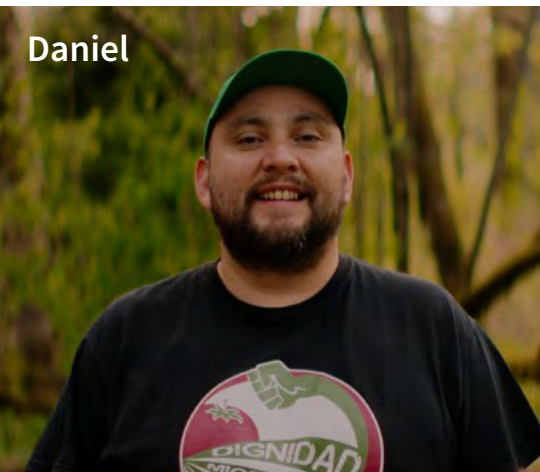
Rashi



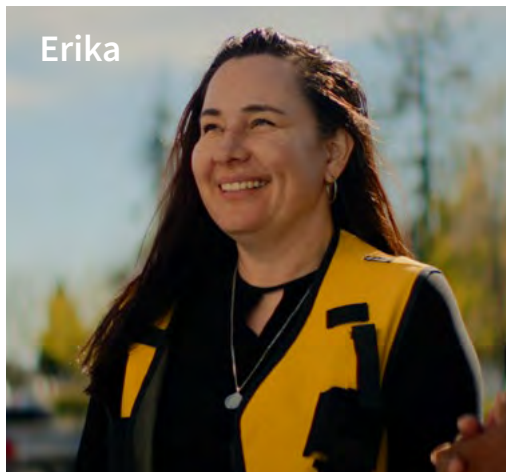
Moqadas



Daniel



Erika



Tayo



Social Enterprises

Meeting service needs, uplifting communities

Social enterprises meet a business need while giving back to the community. DIVERSEcity continues to rely on and grow three innovative social enterprises.

DIVERSEcity Skills Training Centre has proven there is a growing need for short-term, job-ready skills training courses that teach people the workplace essentials they need to propel them into the labour market.

DIVERSEcity Interpretation and Translation Services helps people and organizations communicate across vast languages, with professional interpreters and translators at the helm.

Our **Language Testing Centre** supports thousands of newcomers achieve their permanent resident and citizenship status with CELPIP testing.

2,830

total CELPIP test takers

107

CELPIP tests administered



“

“I learned a lot and I feel way more confident in my computer skills. The instructor was very clear and took the time to explain the material in depth when needed.”

— JOHN, A LEARNER IN THE ESSENTIAL COMPUTER SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE COURSE

Photos: (Above) DIVERSEcity Skills Centre trainers gather to prepare to deliver a new session of courses. (Below) Learners receive hands-on AI training in class at a WorkBC Centre.

15,393

interpretation and
translation job orders

representing **59** per business day
in **33** main languages

52

American Sign Language
(ASL) interpretation requests

1,561

Skills Training Centre learners

were trained with job-ready skills
through **7** courses

98%

of Skills Training Centre learners

felt confident and job-ready
after completing their course

Painting diversity

Throughout our programs and social enterprises, it is DIVERSEcity staff who are at the heart of our impact.

Each employee has a unique story of their own, including Kuntal Patel, one of the first faces you'll see at our reception desk.

In addition to her ability to make people who enter our doors feel welcome and heard, she also shares her love for art with everyone at DIVERSEcity.

"Art has always been part of my life," Kuntal says. "At two years old in India, my father gave me my first crayons and brushes. Growing up I would take part in drawing competitions and even won state-level awards."

But Kuntal stepped away from painting to build a more secure career for herself. It wasn't until years later — after immigrating to Canada — that she reconnected with art.

"What began as a quiet return became a rediscovery," she reflects. "Now, art isn't just my personal expression — it's my purpose."

That rediscovery came full circle with her first public

art project: a new mural in Newton led by celebrated artist Jag Nagra. "The mural mirrors the communities many of us come from and show how public art can create belonging," Kuntal says. "And as an immigrant woman of colour, being part of this gave me the confidence to say: 'I am an artist, and I belong here, too.'"

Last year, she had created eight original pieces for one of DIVERSEcity's prayer rooms and will soon be starting a custom mural for another room.

For an anti-racism textile project she titled *Unseen, Unbroken*, many of her colleagues added their handprints to a fabric mandala representing unity and inclusion — making it a shared piece of art and advocacy. She won first prize with this piece at the PICS Anti-Racism Art Exhibition in March 2025.

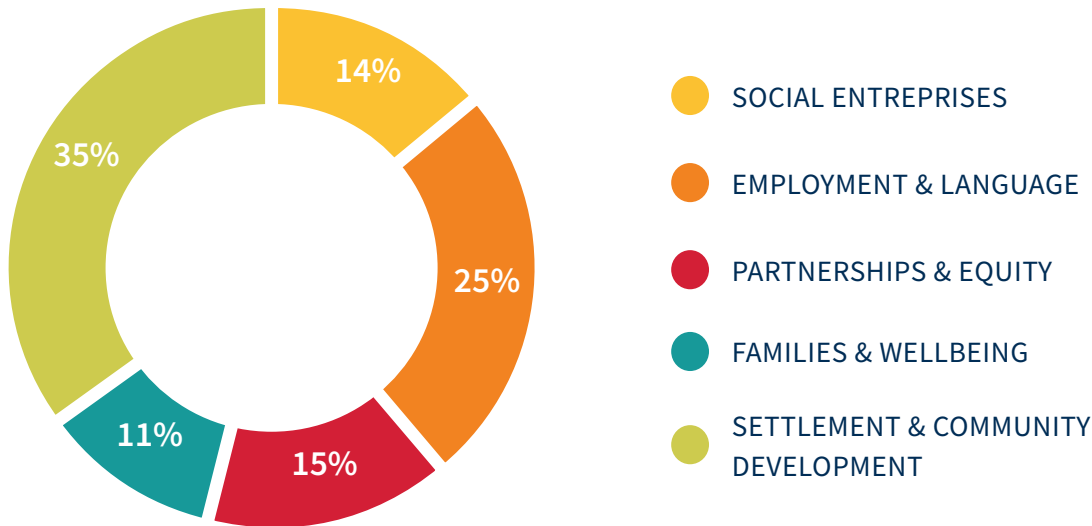
"For me, art and community work go hand-in-hand. Both are about holding space for stories and making people feel seen." ❤️



Funders & Partners

Fulfilling our mission of building connected, stronger and healthier communities can't be done without the support of our funders, partners and countless other sponsors and supporters! We thank you for your collaboration as we advance change, together.

FUNDING OVERVIEW



THANK YOU TO ...

Federal Government Funders

Canada Revenue Agency
Canadian Heritage
Department of Justice Canada
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Employment and Social Development Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada
Public Safety Canada (via City of Surrey)

Provincial Government Funders

Community Gaming Grants Branch
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
Ministry of Attorney General
Ministry of Children and Family Development
Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

Corporate Funders

Coast Capital
RBC Foundation
TD Bank
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Other Funders & Partners

Ace Community College
Active Aging Society
Archway Community Services
AMSSA
A Rocha
BC Family Hearing Resources Centre
BCFED Health & Safety Centre
BC Museum Association
BC Society of Transition Houses
Burnaby Association for Community Living
Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
Canadian Race Relations Foundation
Canadian Women's Foundation
Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
Centre for Child Development
Chilliwack Community Services
City of Delta
City of Surrey
Common Wealth Canada
Community Action Initiative
Community Food Centres Canada

Community Living BC
David Suzuki Foundation
Discovery College
Ending Violence Association of BC
Family Education & Support Centre
Fraser Health Authority
Foundry
ICBC
ISSofBC
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langley Community Services Society
Lower Similkameen Community Services Society
Migrant Workers Centre
Milieu Family Place
Minerva BC
MOSAIC
Mothers Matter Centre
Muslim Food Bank & Community Services
Options Community Services
Pacific Community Resources Society
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society
Paragon Testing Enterprises
Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS)

Roots Community Health Centre
School Districts (Surrey, Coquitlam, Delta)
Sher Vancouver
ShEvaluesco
Simon Fraser University
Sources Community Resources Society
South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
Surrey Board of Trade
Surrey Fire Fighters' Charitable Society
Surrey Libraries
Surrey Women's Centre
Umoja Operation Compassion Society
University of British Columbia
Vancouver Community College
Watari Research Association
United Way British Columbia
UNITI
Vancouver Foundation
WorkBC
WorkSafe BC
YMCA BC
YWCA



We proudly welcomed Coast Salish artists Chase Gray and Nova Wolf to create this public art mural, *Siye'ye*, inspired by themes of harmony, sustainability and reconciliation, thanks to a City of Surrey Cultural Grant.



DIVERSECITY
community resources society



DIVERSECITY
IS OUR
STRENGTH

WITH OPEN
HEARTS

Work with us
dcrs.ca/joinourteam

Volunteer with us
dcrs.ca/volunteer

Donate to DIVERSECITY
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