



June 21, 2018

Dear Community;

The City opened the Saa-ust Centre at 44 East Cordova in collaboration with Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) and the Native Court Workers & Counselling Association of BC to respond to the healing needs for families and survivors before, during and after the National Inquiry. The consultation that was undertaken with community members in April 2017 and the City's Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory Committee is attached here: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/murdered-missing-indigenous-women-girls-working-meeting-report.pdf>

We anticipated the Saa-ust centre would be open over a six-week period; during this period about 20 organizations provided supports and resources including funding in kind services like trauma counselling and cultural activities, and many donations ranging from bannock to office furniture to artwork. However, we have been asked to keep the centre operating until a permanent Indigenous healing and wellness space is opened. This will provide continuity of services, particularly now that the Inquiry has been extended for another six months until June 30, 2019. It will also provide the opportunity to continue to learn what might be possible to provide or consider for the Indigenous healing and wellness space.

City staff are working with partners to create a permanent holistic Indigenous healing and wellness centre. This process is expected to take roughly 12-18 months and will include a community engagement process to help determine the types of services that people need, as well as provide input into the design of the space; the governance model; and secure operating funding. The need for a dedicated Indigenous healing and wellness space was substantiated in part by this research conducted by Kinwa Bluesky, with the assistance of several peer researchers in the DTES: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/aboriginal-health-healing-wellness-final-report.pdf>

Given the desire to extend services, the City and MVAEC asked the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre to be the operator of the space during this temporary period. There is funding available for the next few months of operations and the City & MVAEC are willing to play a role in fundraising and other efforts. VACPC is a member of MVAEC, and Norm Leech and his staff have been involved in the Centre from its beginnings, including providing families and service providers with Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy skills and practice.

VACAPC looks forward to continuing progress and connecting more programming to the centre and more partnerships are underway. Norm can be reached at 604.678.3790 or ExecutiveDirector@vacpc.org.

If more funds are not found, the centre will close operations by the Fall, however, we are hopeful that the more resources will be secured. We would like to thank Lillian Howard for her dedicated efforts in seeing the Saa-ust centre running to meet a critical need, how it was transformed from an empty space

in need of repair to a healing space for over 700 people from 36 different nations. Special thanks also to Native Court Worker and Counselling Services of BC, the team at Saa-ust, to the Inquiry staff, Provincial Health Services Agency and to all others who made this center a success. Thank you for supporting VACPC in taking these next steps.

Signed,



Mary Clare Zak
Director, Social Policy



Norm Leech
Executive Director



Kevin Barlow
CEO

