

**Vancity** Community Foundation

# **THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
2024-2027**

# TRUTH TELLING

## **We acknowledge the stolen lands on which we live and work.**

Vancity Community Foundation (VCF) respectfully acknowledges that we operate on the ancestral, unceded territories of the xʷməθ kʷəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səł'lwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (TsleilWaututh) Nations. We also recognize that our work extends to the territories of the Kwantlen, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, Stó:lō, and Tsawwassen Nations, and other hənq̓əminəm' speaking peoples and Indigenous communities across what is known colonially as the province of British Columbia.

We recognize these lands as the unsundered territories of these Nations, who've been custodians and caretakers since time immemorial. We reside here only due to colonial laws, including the Doctrine of Discovery, that displaced Indigenous people.

We understand colonization's impact on the land, waters, and environment, leading to deforestation, urbanization, and exploitation. These actions have worsened climate change, disproportionately affecting Indigenous Peoples.

## **We acknowledge the historic and ongoing acts and impacts of physical and cultural genocide.**

We recognize global, historical, and ongoing injustices against Indigenous Peoples, including forced displacement, cultural suppression, violence, genocide, day schools, Indian hospitals, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, disproportionate child welfare interventions, missing Indigenous women and girls, and increased incarceration.

These injustices have disrupted Indigenous cultures, societies, and connections. Yet, despite adversities, Indigenous communities display resilience, preserving their cultures, asserting their rights, and leading key social and environmental movements.

## **We acknowledge the unjust sources and inequitable distribution of wealth and power.**

We recognize the role of colonial systems in controlling resources and perpetuating exclusion and oppression. We acknowledge our affiliated public and financial institutions have aided in unequal wealth distribution.

We acknowledge the role of philanthropy in perpetuating oppression, especially toward Indigenous, Black, and other equity-deserving communities, who've disproportionately received far less funding.

## **We acknowledge our role now and in the future.**

Recognizing these truths, we acknowledge our role in creating inequities and commit to collaborating with Indigenous partners for reconciliation and mutual support.

We must decolonize, moving away from white-dominant culture in our operations, practices, and decisions. We'll confront biases in systems and organizations perpetuating inequities. These are vital to establishing right relations (fostering a culture of care and interconnectedness) with Indigenous Peoples and all individuals who have been pushed into the margins.

Acknowledging the journey to repair relationships is complex, we grasp its urgency and prioritize this work immediately.

# INTRODUCTION

Vancity Community Foundation was founded in 1989 on the belief that if we work together, we will have the resources we need to build a thriving, vibrant community.

We have used innovative approaches to amplify the work of non-profit organizations, however, we know that many of our tools, including philanthropy, perpetuated inequities.

Like almost all institutions in our country, philanthropy is a part of oppressive colonial systems that control and move money and resources in ways that perpetuate systemic exclusion and oppression of equity-deserving groups. Control of funding has not been in the hands of those closest to the problems, but rather those with privilege.

Through this new strategic plan, VCF will help to increase equity by focusing on initiatives that grow community-owned assets, distribute collective benefits, and create economic conditions for thriving. We will actively engage with and support communities most impacted by systemic inequalities, seeking their input and leadership in developing and implementing solutions to ensure power is distributed in both the process and outcomes.

# THRIVING COMMUNITIES

We know many communities are not thriving right now. Through our work, we seek to support local leaders, organizations, and networks in advancing solutions to social and environmental challenges. We prioritize initiatives that challenge structural systems of oppression and benefit equity-deserving communities.

## Our Vision

Thriving communities where power is distributed, lives are dignified, and nature is in balance.

## Our Mission

Work with communities to create the economic, social, and environmental conditions to collectively thrive.

## Our Approach to Change

Vancity Community Foundation is committed to catalyzing our resources (Our People, Philanthropy and Social Finance, Capacity Building, Partnerships and Engagement, Research and Knowledge Exchange, and Advocacy), **without colonial constraints, to build deeper capacity in the non-profit sector to address the dual crisis of affordability and climate.**

We are prioritizing Indigenous and Black-led and serving organizations, equity-deserving communities, and the Downtown Eastside.

We recognize these challenges are complex and require a multi-faceted, intersectional approach. We also know that **community-led solutions are the most impactful**, so we follow the lead of partners to identify and support grassroots initiatives.

When **those closest to the problems can build capacity and access the necessary resources**, we are confident that all communities will live in right relations, creating a social fabric of collective resilience that enables communities to adapt and thrive in changing environments.

It is our goal to **disrupt the community foundation and philanthropic spaces** by supporting initiatives that grow community-owned assets, distribute collective benefits, and create economic conditions for thriving.

We will work on the principle of 'invitation', understanding that meaningful change can only occur when communities invite us to collaborate.

# OUR VALUES

## **Reciprocal Relations**

Built on trust and reciprocity, we value community wisdom. Committed to deep listening and collaboration, we believe in achieving stronger outcomes together and that relationships built upon a foundation of respect and solidarity drive impact and equity.

## **Learning and Sharing**

Operating with curiosity, we embrace collective intelligence. We practice 'Two-Eyed Seeing', an approach of inquiry and solution seeking in which people come together to view the world through an Indigenous lens with one eye and a Western lens with the other. Doing so fosters shared learning, and when guided by patience, we can convert knowledge into insights accessible by all.

## **Action and Courage**

Our culture champions courage and community-centered action. We swiftly challenge prevailing narratives and disrupt norms. Centering community movements, we prioritize resource redistribution and equitable power sharing.

## **Redistribution of Wealth and Resources**

We will shift our work to support restorative, reparative efforts that are community-led and governed. We will shift our work away from dominant practices of wealth accumulation that centers the needs and interests of donors and our foundation.

# OUR RESOURCES

## **Our People**

Embodying the values of the Foundation, we center the health and well-being of our people. Embracing inclusive practices, embedded in reciprocity and transparency, we build trust-based and thriving working environments.

## **Philanthropy and Social Finance**

By merging social finance with community-led philanthropy, we offer equitable capital access for groups pushed into the margins and flexible financing reflecting diverse needs. Combining philanthropy, social finance, and long-term funding ensures resources flow where needed and communities can make generational decisions, not just immediate ones.

## **Capacity Building**

We value our partners' expertise. We support their capacity through training, technical aid, and collaborative opportunities. We invest in social innovation by strengthening community capacity, amplifying our impact, and helping build more resilient and equitable organizations.

## **Partnerships and Engagement**

Guided by community, we seek active partnerships that yield sustainable solutions. Rooted in reciprocity and transparency, we engage various stakeholders in shared interests, building trust and innovative solutions.

## **Research and Knowledge Exchange**

Our community-led research approach illuminates community needs and facilitates targeted solutions. Exchanging knowledge balances power and spurs innovation, responsiveness, and progress toward shared goals.

## **Advocacy**

Challenging systems and structures are essential for lasting change. We utilize our community ties and strategic influence to champion the voices of those we work with to change policy and facilitate transformational investments that build thriving communities.

# OUR COMMITMENTS

We believe true change begins from within. We are dedicated to being community-led, upholding our commitments to Truth and Reconciliation and our values of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) and addressing the root causes of climate change. These commitments demand continuous learning, reflection, and accountability as we refine our practices and deepen our dedication to a just and equitable world.

## **We are committed to being community-led.**

Our dedication to being community-led is vital for thriving communities. We address power imbalances by prioritizing the communities we serve in dialogue, planning, and decision-making. We strive to shape an organization that mirrors the community's lived experiences, wisdom, and knowledge.

## **We are committed to Truth and Reconciliation.**

We are a member of *The Circle on Philanthropy* and have signed on to its *Declaration of Action for the Philanthropic Community*. Doing so means we are committed to “supporting the fulfillment of the vision of Indigenous peoples, to building a fairer and more just country, and to the recommendations...outlined by the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.”

We will work, each in our own way, and together, towards achieving the goal of reconciliation.

As a foundation, we are committed to acting upon the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *94 Calls to Action*, the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, and the *Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice*.

## **We are committed to being an anti-racist organization.**

We are a signatory of the *Halifax Declaration* for eradicating racial discrimination, rooted in three objectives of **recognition, justice, and development** for people of African descent. We will work tirelessly to achieve racial equity within our organization and work.

We pursue racial equity in our operations and know prioritizing anti-racism enhances experiences for IBPOC communities, advancing a fair society and fulfilling VCF's vision.

## **We are committed to addressing climate change and adapting to its impacts.**

We are a signatory of the *Canadian Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change*, pledging to educate our stakeholders on climate change's causes, impacts, and solutions; integrate net-zero considerations in our initiatives; support community climate adaptation; align our operations to reduce climate impacts; and transparently report our progress to encourage others.



# OUR PRIORITIES for 2024-2027

VCF is committed to catalyzing resources and making them available without colonial restraints so communities can thrive.

**Restoring Affordability** to ensure that everyone in our community has access to the resources they need to live fulfilled and dignified lives.

**Climate Justice + Resilience** to help communities and the non-profit sector reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

**Community Connection** to support a shared response to shared challenges that strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and the land.

# Priority One

## RESTORING AFFORDABILITY

Vancity Community Foundation aims to ensure that everyone in our community has access to the resources they need to live fulfilled and dignified lives.

We know that while so many people are struggling to make ends meet, a staggering amount of wealth generated over the past several years has been concentrated in the hands of a few. This accumulation of resources and power is exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of colonialism and systemic inequity.

We are committed to restoring affordability through initiatives that grow community-owned assets, distribute collective benefits, and create the economic conditions to collectively thrive. In pursuing this priority, we will actively engage with and support communities most impacted by wealth inequality while at the same time work with those who have benefitted from our current economic system to be active participants in the redistribution of resources and power.

To achieve this over the next three years, VCF commits to:

- **Housing affordability, security, and stability** – By increasing and supporting availability and access to appropriate, safe, and secure affordable housing, focusing on the DTES, Indigenous and Black community members, and folks from equity-deserving communities.
- **Livable income, fair wages, and dignified work** – By creating the conditions for all workers to earn a living wage, including those in the non-profit sector, and support advocacy efforts for necessary income reforms for those living in poverty.
- **Green economic development** – Support backbone organizations working to provide meaningful employment opportunities for folks from the DTES, Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities who are focused on climate mitigation and resiliency.

# Priority Two

## CLIMATE JUSTICE + RESILIENCE

Vancity Community Foundation aims to help communities and the non-profit sector reduce emissions and adapt to a changing climate.

We recognize that human-induced climate change has accelerated extreme events that disproportionately affect equity-deserving communities. We are committed to addressing this injustice by ensuring the inclusion of impacted communities in climate solutions, beginning with Indigenous guardians, the original caretakers of the land. We are dedicated to supporting solutions that are accessible and affordable for all and meet the needs of equity-deserving communities.

We are committed to partnering with non-profit organizations to build capacity for climate action for themselves and the communities they support.

To achieve this, over the next three years VCF will:

- **Non-profit climate resiliency** – Develop benchmarking and mitigation strategies to facilitate transformational investment in non-profits serving priority communities to ensure they can withstand the dual challenges of climate and affordability.
- **Climate mitigation and readiness in the community housing sector** – To boost the number of projects funded by the Affordable Community Housing Program and Accelerator Fund targeting net zero emissions and mitigating climate change risks disproportionately affecting Indigenous, Black, and DTES communities.

# Priority Three

## COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Vancity Community Foundation aims to support a shared response to shared challenges that strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and the land.

We understand that creating the conditions for communities to thrive requires more than material resources – it is grounded in social capital and connectedness. Just as interconnected elements within natural ecosystems play a role in health and resilience, we recognize the importance of fostering solid community connections and relationships.

We are committed to making the tools, spaces, and places available for the community to connect, grow, and deepen relationships, encouraging the sharing of power, wealth, and resources. Through these channels, we support the development of ideas, innovations, and initiatives that catalyze positive community impact while strengthening the bonds between individuals, communities, and the lands they inhabit.

To achieve this over the next three years, VCF commits to:

- **Hub for community development and reciprocity** – By providing an affordable option for non-profits at 312 Main to deliver programs and be in community with like-minded organizations that inspire creativity, innovation, and collective care.
- **Social Purpose Real Estate** – Through funding and advocacy, we will help increase the number of spaces and places for equity-deserving communities that support connection and well-being.