



## REPORT

Report Date: February 1, 2022  
Contact: Mary Clare Zak  
Contact No.: 604.871.6588  
RTS No.: 15002  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: March 29, 2022  
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services in consultation with the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management

SUBJECT: Revised and Expanded Timeframe for Saa-ust Licence, 44 East Cordova Street

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- A. THAT Council authorize the Directors of Real Estate Services and Legal Services to seek approval from The Vancouver Public Housing Corporation (“VPHC”), which is wholly owned by the City, to negotiate and execute a new licence agreement with The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (the “Society”), which is a charitable organization registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, as the non-profit operator of the Saa-ust Centre (“Saa-ust”), located in an approximately 2,500 square foot ground-floor retail space (the “Premises”) owned by the VPHC with a civic address of 44 East Cordova Street and legally described as:

PID’s 015-691-144 and 015-691-187; Lots 9 & 10, Block 8, District Lot, and legally described as: 196, Plan 184, New Westminster Land District.

The new licence agreement will be on the terms approved by Council in RTS 14092 on November 24, 2020, except that the length of term will be revised and expanded to two (2) years commencing January 1, 2022, with an additional one (1) year renewal option to be approved by the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services. The Society will pay a nominal, below-market licence fee for the Premises and thus Council’s approval of this Recommendation A will constitute a grant of approximately \$40,000 per annum.

- B. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's approval of Recommendation A unless and until VPHC enters into the licence agreement with the Society.

Approval of Recommendation A constitutes a grant because the City is the sole shareholder of VPHC and therefore requires affirmative votes for at least 2/3 of all Council members pursuant to Section 206(1) of the *Vancouver Charter*.

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report recommends that Council approve a request to VPHC for permission to negotiate a two-year nominal-rent licence, with a one-year renewal upon approval by the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services, to operate Saa-ust, an Indigenous wellness centre, on a portion of the Premises.

### **COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

On June 20, 2018 (RTS 12527), Council approved the operation of Saa-ust by The Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society beginning in March 2018 under a one-year licence.

On November 24, 2020 (RTS 14092), Council approved a second six-month licence for Saa-ust at its current location to start on January 1, 2021.

In December 2020, Council approved \$2M in the Capital Budget to secure a permanent location for Saa-ust.

### **CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

### **REPORT**

#### ***Background/Context***

##### About the Saa-ust Centre

Saa-ust has been supporting Indigenous health and wellness since 2018. The Saa-ust program was initiated under the leadership of the Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee and other Indigenous advisors and community leaders. Saa-ust is a responsive action towards reconciliation during the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls (MMIWG). Located on the traditional, unceded and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, Saa-ust was named by Musqueam Elder Shane Pointe. It means "lifting each other up," providing Indigenous medicine and support for families and survivors of MMIWG. It is a 2SLGBTQQI safe space and respects families of the heart. Please see RTS 14092 (attached in Appendix A) for a fuller history and analysis of the origins and progress of Saa-ust.

### City Lease Support to the Saa-ust Centre

As noted above, on June 20, 2018 (RTS 12527), Council approved the operation of Saa-ust by The Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society, beginning in March 2018 under the one-year original licence. At the conclusion of that first year, the original licence went into overholding while operation of Saa-ust transitioned to The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (the “IRSSS”).

On November 24, 2020 (RTS 14092), Council approved a second six-month licence for Saa-ust at its current location to start on January 1, 2021. Internal City staff turnover and other capacity challenges led to delays in seeking approval for a second licence from Vancouver Public Housing Corporation and the IRSSS continues to operate Saa-ust under the original licence agreement.

Simultaneously, Social Policy and Projects has been working in partnership with the Indigenous partners to lease long-term space for Saa-ust at another location currently under development. In December 2020, Council approved \$2M in the Capital Budget for this purpose. The City has secured a location within the Indigenous-led Aboriginal Land Trust project at 52-92 East Hastings through a Letter Of Intent (LOI) and grant agreement. The City will issue an RFP for a long-term operator as Saa-ust transitions out of the temporary space at 44 E Cordova. The project at 52-92 East Hastings has received Development Permit approval and is expected to be completed and ready for occupancy by 2024/25.

### ***Strategic Analysis***

Healing from the trauma of colonization and ongoing grief of individuals and families impacted by missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, overdose and COVID-related deaths, and violence in the Indigenous community is a long-term process requiring time and community support in culturally appropriate and safe spaces. The fundamental conditions outlined in RTS 14092 (Appendix A) are unchanged - the need for a holistic, healing and wellness centre with an emphasis on Indigenous wellness techniques and practices in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) remains critical.

The Indian Residential School Survivors Society has provided important health and wellness services at Saa-ust for four years. Continued support by the City until an expanded new and more permanent centre for Indigenous wellness services can be established is strongly recommended. As an ongoing interim location for Saa-ust operations is required until the RFP and occupancy of 52-92 East Hastings, with preference for continuity of service and minimal disruption, staff is now recommending the expanded second licence start on January 1, 2022, run for two years and include an additional one-year option to renew, subject to approval by the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services to allow for unanticipated circumstances.

### ***Implications/Related Issues/Risk***

#### ***Financial***

Staff recommends that basic rent be set at a nominal rate of \$10.00 per year, inclusive of payment in lieu of property taxes.

Nominal rent is considered a grant based on the fair market value of the lease or licence. The current comparable annual market rental value for the Premises is estimated at approximately \$40,000 per annum.

Per the original licence, the Society would be responsible for any maintenance and repair costs arising from its use of the Premises under the recommended second licence. The City would only assume responsibility for lifecycle repairs and replacements and maintenance and repairs that would have arisen regardless of whether or not the Premises were occupied by the Society.

### ***Legal***

City of Vancouver Standing Authority allows the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management or the Director of Finance to approve the material terms of leases or licences where the total rental value is less than \$1,000,000 for terms (including renewal options) of no more than 10 years and where City standard documentation is not amended. However, leases or licences that are provided at less than market rent are considered equivalent to a grant to the tenant and therefore require approval by eight affirmative votes of Council as per Section 206 (1) of the Vancouver Charter.

The 42-44 East Cordova building in which the Premises are located is legally owned by the VPHC. This report recommends authorizing the Directors of Legal Services and Real Estate Services to seek approval from VPHC to negotiate with the Society a second licence on the terms approved in RTS 14092 with the revised and expanded timeframe described herein.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The need for healing and wellness supports for Indigenous families and community offered at Saa-ust in the DTES remains strong. The second licence, with the recommended expanded timeframe, will help to ensure the Indian Residential School Survivors Society can continue to deliver its important services with security of tenure until a permanent location at 52-92 East Hastings (Aboriginal Land Trust – Indigenous Healing Centre) is developed and made operational.

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## REPORT

Report Date: October 15, 2020  
Contact: Mary Clare Zak  
Contact No.: 604.871.6643  
RTS No.: 14092  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: November 24, 2020  
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services in consultation with the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management

SUBJECT: New Licence Agreement for Saa-ust ("Lift Up") Centre, 44 East Cordova Street

### RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council authorize the Director of Real Estate Services to negotiate and execute a licence agreement (the "Licence") with The Indian Residential School Survivors Society (the "Society"), which is a charitable organization registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, as the non-profit operator for a portion of the City-owned property with a civic address of 44 East Cordova Street, and legally described as: *PID's 015-691-144 and 015-691-187; Lots 9 & 10, Block 8, District Lot 196, Plan 184, New Westminster Land District* (the "Premises"), a site plan and floor plan of which is included in Appendix A. The Licence shall be on the following basic terms, and otherwise on terms satisfactory to the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management, the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services and the Director of Legal Services:

Term: Six (6) months, commencing January 1, 2021

Rent (Licence Fee): \$10.00 for the Term

Early Termination: in favour of the City upon 60 days' written notice

Overholding: upon expiry of the Term on a month-to-month basis

Maintenance: City will only be responsible for repairs and maintenance that would have been necessary if the Society did not hold a licence for the Premises, and all other repair, maintenance and operating costs to be the responsibility of the Society

- B. THAT no legal rights or obligations will arise or be created by Council's adoption of Recommendation A unless and until all legal documentation has been executed and delivered by the respective parties.

As the rent under the Licence for the Premises will be below the applicable market rate and includes rent-in-lieu of property taxes, Recommendation A constitutes a grant valued at approximately \$20,000 for the term of the Licence and requires 2/3 affirmative votes of Council.

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report recommends that Council approve a six-month nominal-rent licence to the Society to operate Saa-ust, an Indigenous wellness centre, on a portion of the Premises.

### **COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS**

City of Vancouver Standing Authority allows the General Manager of Real Estate and Facilities Management or the Director of Finance to approve the material terms of leases or licences where the total rental value is less than \$750,000 for terms (including renewal options) of no more than 10 years and where City standard documentation is not amended. However, leases or licences that are provided at less than market rent are considered equivalent to a grant to the tenant and therefore require approval by eight affirmative votes of Council as per Section 206 (1) of the Vancouver Charter.

On February 26, 2013, Council endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On July 8, 2014, Council designated Vancouver as a City of Reconciliation and in 2015, the City identified areas of action under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada recommendations.

On October 29 2014, Council approved *A Healthy City for All: Healthy City Strategy 2014-2025 – Phase I* (RTS 10493) which identifies Being and Feeling Safe and Included and Healthy Human Services as goals and the 2014-2018 action plan seeks to “advance opportunities for reconciliation and healing from the negative impacts and stereotypes that resulted from Canada's residential school system.”

In 2014, the Mayor's Task Force on Mental Health and Addictions' *Caring for All: Priority Actions to Address Mental Health and Addictions* identified the need for Indigenous healing and wellness as 1 of 6 action areas.

On March 15, 2014, Council adopted the *Downtown Eastside Local Area Plan* (RTS 10175) which identifies support for the Indigenous community in their pursuit of the establishment of an area or site of meaningful community as a priority.

In 2017, Council received for information findings of a study funded by the City, entitled *Aboriginal Health, Healing and Wellness in the DTES* that identified gaps in healing and wellness supports including dedicated space, supports for Elders, and access for women

and youth.

In 2018 (RTS 12527), Council supported a one-year licence agreement to Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society to allow initial operation of Saa-ust at the Premises.

### **CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

### **REPORT**

#### ***Background/Context***

##### Background

The need for a holistic, non-western medicalized healing and wellness centre with an emphasis on Indigenous wellness techniques and practices in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) has been identified for many years. For example, in 2011, the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study report found access to culturally reflective healing practices to be as, if not more, important than access to mainstream health care for the majority of urban Indigenous peoples. The Mayor's Task Force on Mental Health and Addictions in 2014 further identified the need for a healing and wellness strategy and supports.

In response, in 2015 the City created an Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centres Advisory Committee and Working Group (AHWC), comprised of Elders, urban Indigenous service providers, and local residents to better understand and document the locations and types of Indigenous traditional, spiritual, cultural supports, and services offered in the DTES, as well as gaps and priorities.

In April 2017, consultation to determine how the City could support the families and survivors participating in the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) that took place in 2018 and 2019 was undertaken by the Urban Indigenous People's Advisory Committee with about 50 different community groups and all levels of government, including Inquiry staff. The consultation identified as a priority cultural supports including access to Elders and ceremony as an important part of taking care of families before, during, and after the Inquiry.

The DTES Indigenous Healing and Wellness Final Report (2017) – informed by the advisory group noted above – identified the following key issues and gaps:

- Reconciliation and healing initiatives are required to understand the history of colonization and the impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples;
- There is a lack of support for Elders and healers to provide traditional, spiritual, and cultural health and healing services, especially to Indigenous women, youth, and children; and
- More spaces and places were needed for Indigenous health, healing, and wellness supports and services and are needed in the DTES and other locations in Vancouver.

The City, in response to these clear identifications of needs, conducted a search of its properties and determined that an unused 3,000 square foot ground floor retail space in the Premises at 44 East Cordova Street, which is owned by the City through the Vancouver Public Housing Corporation, might be suitable for a temporary wellness centre as a first step toward more permanent solutions.

### The Saa-ust Centre

The Central Residence at 42-44 East Cordova St. is a 6-storey building containing, besides the retail space, 131 SRO units averaging 100 square feet each. It was built in 1893 and is listed in the City's heritage registry as a 'B' class building. The City acquired the building in 1976 and since then it has been operated by the City's Non-Market Housing as part of its housing portfolio.

In March 2018, in collaboration with the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) and the Native Court Workers & Counselling Association of BC and under the auspices of the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, the retail space at 44 E. Cordova was refurbished and opened as the Saa-ust Centre ("Saa-ust"). Saa-ust registered families and survivors involved in the MMIWG and provided the opportunity to make statements, as well as offering healing and wellness supports. Although the MMIWG concluded in 2019, there is a demonstrated ongoing need for many of these supports. This need is particularly acute for individuals and families impacted by the inquiry and triggered by its testimonial process.

### ***Strategic Analysis***

The creation of Saa-ust significantly improves access to culturally reflective healing and wellness supports (please see Appendix B for a listing of programs, activities and partnerships of the Society). While permanent space and funding is not yet secured, City staff is working with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, urban Indigenous partners, and local residents to locate a suitable long-term site. But even the short-term support of Saa-ust by the City and its commitment to continue work on the development of a permanent Indigenous healing and wellness centre is an early and important signal to other potential partners that the Centre and the services it offers is of critical importance to the community and an important act of reconciliation.

As part of its medium- and long-term planning, Non-Market Housing is exploring options for the Premises so long-term use of the Premises cannot be confirmed. Meanwhile, work continues on finding a permanent space for the healing and wellness centre. In 2018 Council approved \$700,000 for such a centre. As well, in 2020, Council approved an additional grant to MVAEC to accelerate their work on an Indigenous-led healing and wellness strategy, which will support the City in targeting support and investments to priorities set by the community. Further, on September 16, 2020, Council endorsed funding for a healing and wellness space in the Downtown Eastside as part of the 2019- 2022 Capital Plan Mid-Term Update and Recalibration. Since the future of the Premises is unclear and the City has strongly committed to contributing to a more permanent space, it is recommended that the Licence to operate Saa-ust be limited to six months.



The direction of the Saa-ust Centre has passed from the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society (the last licence holder) to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, a well-established charitable organization with a mandate to “assist First Nation Peoples across British Columbia to recognize and be holistically empowered by the primary and generational effect of the Residential Schools through research, education, awareness, partnerships, and advocating for justice and healing.” The Society assists Survivors with counselling, court support, information, referrals, workshops, and more.

It is anticipated that the continued operation of Saa-ust at the Premises and the creation of a long-term Indigenous healing and wellness centre will:

- Enable access to cultural services and healing for people in the DTES and across the city;
- Make Indigenous concepts of health more accessible;
- Reduce barriers to access, such as racism and discrimination;
- Improve overall community safety;
- Support reconciliation initiatives arising from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, specifically:
  - o Action #20. Recognize needs of Indigenous off-reserve
  - o Action #21. Fund Indigenous Healing Centres
  - o Action #22. Recognize healing practices, healers and Elders
- Create a point of entry and hub for information sharing and for referrals to all service providers in the DTES and surrounding areas, such as Community Health Centres, Rapid Access Centres, and Mental Health services;
- Increase culturally competent care in primary health, dental, vision, and mental health and wellness, and addiction services; and
- Improve the navigation of all types of health services.

As a result, it is anticipated the community will experience better health outcomes for all Indigenous groups: women, 2SLGBTQ+, men, Elders and seniors, and children and youth. Moreover, the relationship building, partnerships, and community-driven development process can help address the impacts of colonization and residential schools in a deeply culturally reflective way, demonstrating that as a City of Reconciliation, Vancouver is committed to recognizing the strengths and assets of Indigenous communities while working to address systemic barriers and socioeconomic inequities.

### ***Implications/Related Issues/Risk***

#### ***Financial***

Staff recommends that basic rent be set at a nominal rate of \$10.00 for the 6-month term, inclusive of payment in lieu of property taxes. Nominal rent is considered a grant based on the fair market value of the lease or licence. The current comparable annual market rental value for the Premises is estimated at approximately \$40,000 per annum, or \$20,000 for the 6-month term of the proposed Licence. As per the previous licence, the City would only assume responsibility for maintenance and repairs that would have arisen regardless of whether or not the Premises were occupied by the Society.

***Legal***

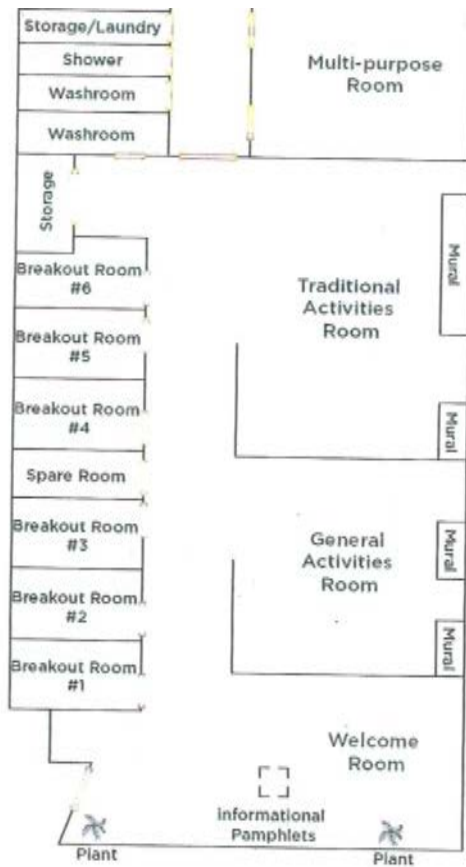
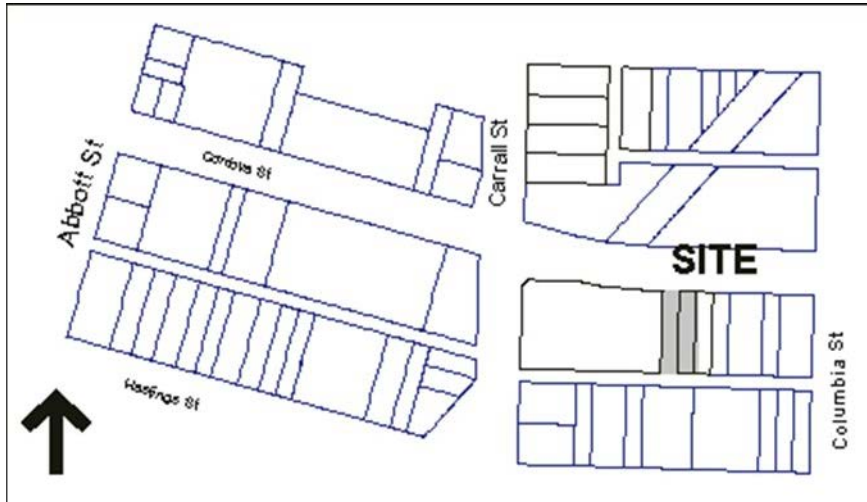
The Saa-ust Centre operates in a context of complex strategic planning both for the building out of which Saa-ust operates and the general need for an Indigenous health and wellness centre in the DTES. Real Estate and Facilities Management and Social Policy and Projects will instruct Legal Services to prepare the Licence for the Premises, including an early termination clause with 60 days' notice in case the City determines other needs for the Premises must be met, and an overholding clause to allow the Society, should the building remain available, to continue their use of the Premises while strategic planning initiatives of the City continue. Social Policy and Projects and Non-Market Housing will jointly oversee ongoing management of the Premises.

***CONCLUSION***

The Saa-ust Centre is a very significant but nonetheless stopgap measure to address the Indigenous health and wellness needs identified in multiple studies and consultations. The proposed licence will provide a temporary measure of security for the Society, its partners and clients while further planning proceeds.

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Site Plan and Floor Plan of the Premises



## Current Programs, Services and partnerships of the Saa-ust Centre:

### Current Saa-ust programs and services:

- Day trips (tobogganing and lunch in whistler, suspension bridge and lunch, sunsets at Vancouver lookout);
- Provincial MMIWG support network;
- 2SLGBTQ support;
- Beading beading earrings, beginners beading;
- Medicine wheel teachings;
- Drumming circle, Drum making (3 drums made, Drum teachings, drum repairs);
- Sage picking in Merrit;
- Personal safety workshops;
- 16 days of action of ending violence against women and girls;
- Brushing off ceremony;
- Blanketing ceremony;
- Grandmother council meetings;
- 60's scoop healing circle plus feast every second Monday (meals donated by community sponsors & restaurants);
- Indigenous story telling sessions;
- Christmas card program;
- Counselling;
- Smudge kit making, Community smudging practice;
- Provincial FN Youth Tour Group (every few months with youth from across province);
- Free Umbrella Program, Free Blanket Program;
- Donation program for winter;
- Saa'ust check in program (people can send messages to loved ones in the DTES);
- Library book resource available on site;
- Valentines card making;
- Annual Mothers' day event;
- Christmas Hamper Donations;
- Local artists support;
- Collaboration Centre for Prison Health and Education;
- Feeding local SRO's;
- Information tables at multiple events across the City;
- Water ceremony;
- Free coffee and tea program; open for MMIWG March;
- Drumming/Elder at multiple MMIWG families' funerals/vigils;
- Free medicine program ongoing;
- Residential School/Colonialism workshop.

### COVID-19-Related Programs and Services:

- Covid-19 Support weekly gift cards to buy groceries and supplies;
- Employment liaison;
- Communications for homeless clients to reach home;
- Travel assistance, appointment assistance for clients;
- Feeding people who need food;

- Client check-in;
- Grocery delivery for elders;
- Hand sanitizer available, masks available;
- Traditional medicines available;
- Funeral and cultural support;
- Elders support;
- Counselling;
- Uplifting events online.

Upcoming programs and visits:

- Christmas Hamper Give Out;
- 16 Days of Action to End Violence Against Women and Girls;
- Christmas covid gift card support;
- Remembrance day support;
- Hospital communications for clients in ICU;
- Ongoing funeral support;
- Ice sculpture awareness project;
- Canoe project;
- Youth justice program;
- National MMIWG support network.

Partnerships:

- **Pacific Association of First Nations Women**  
Saa-ust works with PAFWN on various events and cross referrals for counselling services. Over the last year they have also been sharing space in Saa-ust's office. The two organizations align very well as PAFWN provides a wide range of services for Women in the GVA and Saa-ust provides a specialized service for families and survivors effected by the issue of MMIWG.
- **Grandmothers Council**  
Saa-ust has been working in collaboration with the Grandmothers council since inception in 2018. Currently the Grandmothers Council has an office within Saa-ust's space and they meet monthly to discuss various different partnership opportunities within the community. The Grandmothers Council is an organization that helps provide advice and council on various challenges the indigenous community faces. Saa-ust is discussing various points of collaboration for future projects coming up in 2021.
- **Uplifting Indigenous Families Association**  
UIFA is a newer organization that is based around healing and education for families affected by the issue of MMIWG. They have an office within Saa-ust's space and the two organizations have collaborated on many events over the last few years. They are a smaller organization run 100% by volunteers, leveraging partnerships to achieve their goals.
- **Butterfly Research Group**  
BRG engages in various indigenous research projects within the GVA they have been using Saa-ust's space to finalize a three-year project centred around the use of

culture and ceremony to heal from trauma. Saa-ust is also collaborating on a longer long term project with them starting in 2021 for cultural healing and ceremony on the water.

- **Kilala Lelum**

Kilala Lelum is an indigenous health clinic with doctors, nurses, outreach workers and councillors. They are a growing organization with over 30+ staff and Saa-ust has a very strong relationship with them. We have collaborated with them for over a year and a half now and have ongoing weekly programming with them. Kilala Lelum is also participating with Saa-ust and BRG in the upcoming project on healing and ceremony on the water.