

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24





We acknowledge with gratitude that we live, work, and play on the traditional unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

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Our Funding Partners





# Jenna Forbes

CHAIR

Tremendous congratulations to ACCESS for another successful year of operations and celebrating 20+ years of dedication supporting urban Indigenous communities across Metro Vancouver to gain meaningful employment.

It is a great honour to contribute alongside the tireless staff, managers, the President and CEO and Board Members to the success of so many community members to have access to quality education, certification and connections to gain meaningful employment. The ACCESS team have all rallied together to continue our goals of supporting our urban Indigenous community members adapt and meet their employment goals and overcome barriers. Our professional staff, partnerships and stakeholders are truly the foundations of our success - they bring inspiration, creativity, loyalty, resiliency and support to the Board of Directors that enables us to make informed decisions. I've observed them working tirelessly with great enthusiasm to meet the needs of community to achieve the mission they are committed to: "To increase Indigenous participation in the labour

market" for both youth and adults. We, as a board, are extremely proud of the ACCESS team, who work together as a team to deliver quality services to our diverse urban Indigenous folks. I want to acknowledge that these employees go above and beyond and work with our program participants to create atmospheres for healing, building confidence and finding what job brings them the most joy.

I would also like to recognize and acknowledge the Board of Directors past and present who give so willingly of their time to serve ACCESS, they are all very busy individuals who are Executive Directors/ CEOs of their own organizations and yet make time to give back to community by serving on a governing board for ACCESS. Thank you for your commitment, dedication and leadership; it is an honor to serve you.

**Hasaqu nm t'oyaxsn da gasgaaw waan**

*(I want to thank you for how much you have done).*

Congratulations again to all involved, a job well done.



# Lynn White

PRESIDENT & CEO

I am proud to present our annual report for 2023-24. This year has been one of significant change and growth. As we emerge from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a tremendous demand from the community for training opportunities. In response, we have expanded our programming, which has been met with enthusiastic participation. Our team has been innovative in developing relevant and in-demand programs, catering to the needs of all ages and skill levels within our Urban Indigenous community. Our success is a testament to our dedicated staff, who continuously seek new opportunities and inventive ways to support our community.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our supportive board of directors. Your encouragement and guidance have been invaluable as we work to strengthen our community's cultural and economic power, highlighting the unique contributions our people bring to the urban environment and beyond.

This year, we officially rebranded our Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures (ESAF) program to Indigenous Skills 4 Success (IS4S) to align with changes made by Service Canada. We also concluded our National five-year project with the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), collaborating with CAHRD (Winnipeg), Miziwe Biik (Toronto), NENAS (Northeastern BC), Tricorp (Northwestern BC), and NEST (Nisga). We are grateful for the opportunity to work with these organizations and wish them continued success. This collaboration enriched our staff by providing insights into how different organizations across Canada manage their ISETS programs.

Our trades training programs have grown significantly, thanks to the successful acquisition of SPF funding. This expansion has resulted in more community members securing well-paying jobs in skilled trades. In August, we incorporated a cultural event by hosting a witnessing ceremony to honour students who completed the Electrical Pathways program, culminating in their achievement of the Red Seal certification. It was a memorable event that underscored the importance of celebrating our successes and motivates us to continue supporting our students on their educational journeys.

All our departments have met or exceeded their targets. Our Employment Services department has effectively responded to the increased demand, ensuring that each client receives respectful and compassionate assistance as they explore new opportunities. Our youth leadership program continues to grow, offering exciting new opportunities for young people to determine their paths in education and employment.

The BladeRunners program, now in its thirtieth year, continues to provide essential services and support to young people needing assistance to become employed and achieve stability. As provincial managers, we support and administer services to fifteen organizations throughout the province.

I am confident that we have successfully navigated the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to deliver high-quality services to our community now and into the future.



# Background

ACCESS began as a cooperative venture of the urban Indigenous community of Greater Vancouver. Our founding members came together to ensure that the employment and training needs of urban Indigenous people in Metro Vancouver were being met.

A duly incorporated BC not-for-profit society since 2002, ACCESS has grown into one of the most comprehensive employment and training service providers in Canada. We support all Indigenous people, providing status, non-status, Métis, and Inuit people with access to education and training that leads to meaningful long-term employment. Our client-first approach integrates the expertise of six business units to streamline our program participants' experience with us.

At ACCESS we provide services for Indigenous people by Indigenous people. Decisions related to programming and operations are made for the betterment of our urban Indigenous community and are consistent with The TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP. A vital component of our programming is the integration of Indigenous culture, which helps to ground our participants, instilling pride and confidence in who they are, and empowering them for continued success.

In 2019, ACCESS signed a 10-year Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) program agreement, securing our funding until 2029.

## OUR MISSION

To increase Indigenous participation in the labour market.

## OUR VISION

ACCESS envisions an urban Indigenous community empowered through culture, wellness, achievement, and self-sufficiency.

## OUR MANDATE

ACCESS serves to enhance human resource development and the sustainable capacity of the urban Indigenous population in Greater Vancouver through the provision of employment and training.

OUR CORE VALUES:

Honour  
Kindness  
Respect  
Sharing



# ACCESS Board of Directors



**Jenna Forbes**

ACCESS CHAIR

Vancouver Aboriginal  
Transformative Justice  
Services Society



**Olivia Jim**

ACCESS SECRETARY

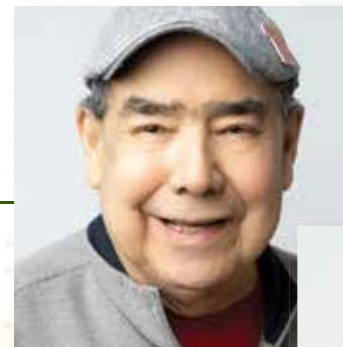
Helping Spirit  
Lodge Society



**Merv Thomas**

ACCESS VICE CHAIR

Circle of Eagles  
Lodge Society



**Lou Demerais**

ACCESS DIRECTOR

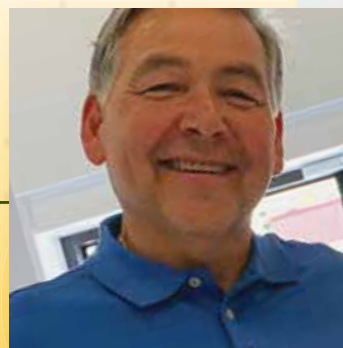
Community Leader



**Susan Tatoosh**

ACCESS DIRECTOR

Vancouver Aboriginal  
Friendship Centre Society



**Nick Calla**

ACCESS TREASURER

Calla Financial



## Governance

A volunteer Board of Directors, representative of the needs, interests and diversity of the urban Indigenous population of the Greater Vancouver region, guides the growth and direction of ACCESS. The Board of Directors establishes policies and strategic direction for ACCESS and entrusts daily operations to a capable staff and management team. All authority is delegated through the President and CEO. The Board meets ten times per year and as required to address issues and opportunities. Timely responsiveness is a key to professional and needs-directed human resource development.

## Leadership

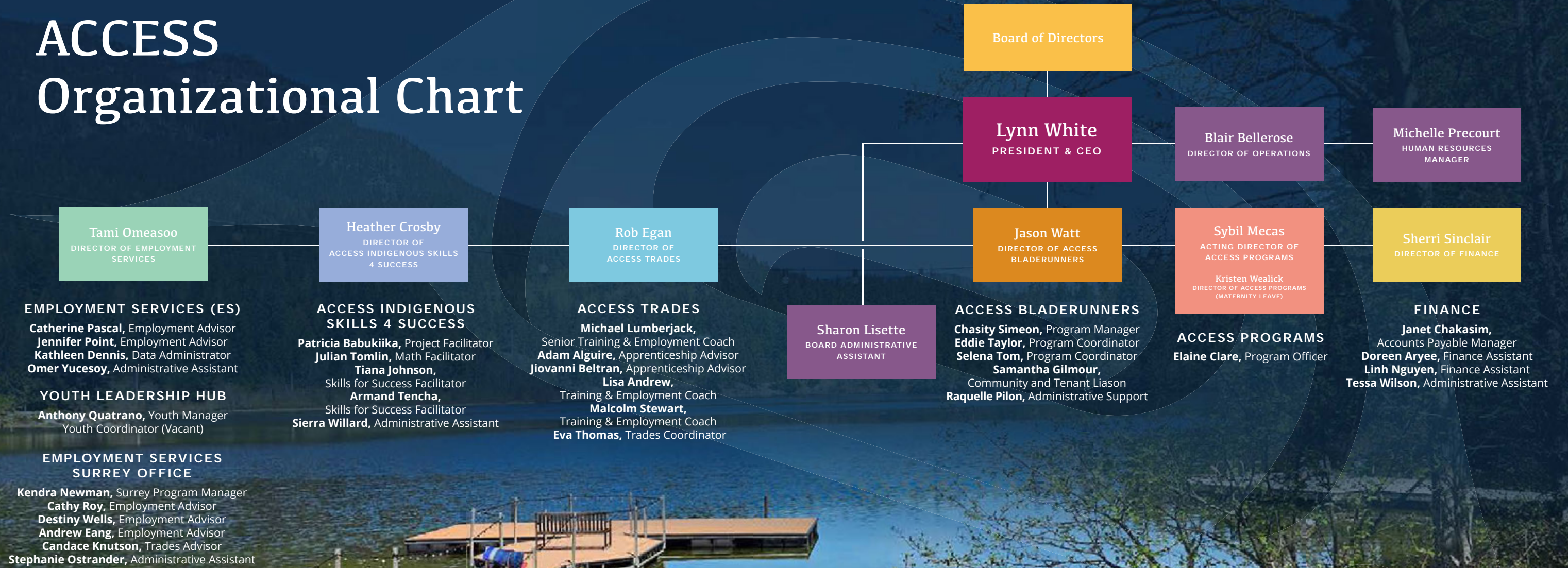
The President and CEO is the official ACCESS representative to the Board of Directors, the community and the media. The President and CEO provides leadership consistent with Board approved ACCESS policies, goals, and objectives. Specifically, this includes the development and implementation of the ACCESS strategic business plan and annual operating plans, as well as fiscal planning and accountability, asset protection, and maximization of human resources. Reports and recommendations that analyze progress, measure success and identify hurdles are provided to the Board on a regular basis.

## Management Team

The President and CEO oversees a management team comprised of Directors and Managers who work together collaboratively to ensure the successful delivery of the strategic goals and priorities of ACCESS. These individuals are responsible for the operational success of their departments, which is achieved through outstanding management practices including team leadership, ensuring accountability with thorough reporting, developing capacity through funding proposals, and building and maintaining partnerships with industry partners, training institutions and all levels of government.



# ACCESS Organizational Chart





# ACCESS Locations



Serving the urban  
Indigenous community  
of Greater Vancouver  
for over 20 years



- ACCESS Head Office**  
108 - 100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2  
TEL: 604 913-7933  
FAX: 604 913-7938
- ACCESS Trades**  
108 - 100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2  
TEL: 604 922-4077  
FAX: 604 922-4088
- ACCESS BladeRunners Surrey**  
10708 136A Street  
Surrey, BC V3T 5G9  
TEL: 778-395-0385  
FAX: 604-581-0944
- ACCESS Indigenous Skills 4 Success (IS4S)**  
201 - 681 Columbia Street  
New Westminster, BC V3M 1A8  
TEL: 604 521-5929  
FAX: 604 521-5931
- ACCESS Programs**  
108 - 100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2  
TEL: 604 913-7933  
FAX: 604 913-7938
- ACCESS Employment Services**  
110 - 1607 East Hastings Street  
Vancouver, BC V5L 1S7  
TEL: 604 251-7955  
FAX: 604 251-7954
- BladeRunners Provincial Management**  
1848 Commercial Drive  
Vancouver, BC V5N 4A5  
TEL: 604-688-9116  
FAX: 604-688-9146
- BladeRunners Place**  
250 Powell Street  
Vancouver, BC V6A 0E2  
TEL: 604-558-7787  
FAX: 604-608-0476
- ACCESS Employment Services**  
10708 136A Street  
Surrey, BC V3T 5G9  
TEL: 778 395-0385  
FAX: 604 581-0944
- ACCESS BladeRunners Vancouver**  
1848 Commercial Drive  
Vancouver, BC V5N 4A5  
TEL: 604 688-9116  
FAX: 604 688-9146

## TWO EMPLOYMENT SERVICES LOCATIONS



# Employment Services (ES)

Employment Services (ES) have two locations in Vancouver and Surrey that provide comprehensive employment and training service delivery to Indigenous people in Metro Vancouver. Employment Advisors offer one-on-one support to clients to bridge employability gaps and to foster more meaningful engagement in the urban Labour Market. Clients are also assisted with resumes, cover letters, interview skills and career planning strategies. Resource Labs are available to assist clients with job search or career exploration.

**ES offers financial support for job starts, group training, individual seat purchases, short term certificates, and Targeted Wage Subsidies.**

ES commitment to clients is paramount and is always led with integrity and respect in every aspect of service delivery. Urban Indigenous clients enhance their skills in all areas that enable them to achieve employment and career goals. Each client success is fundamental in the work we do. It is a catalyst in ES department's commitment to work collaboratively with clients and to continue to build a future for the Indigenous urban population.



**Chelsea Barron**  
CHILCOTIN (T̓SILHQOT'IN)

Chelsea successfully completed her Machinist Red Seal in 2017. She continued to work hard and gain experience and was led down a path in education. She became the first Indigenous female instructor within the Machinist Department at BCIT. ACCESS funded her to take part time studies to achieve her Provincial Instructors Diploma with VCC. The support from ACCESS changed her life. She developed the life skills needed to be successful in the machining industry which helped with her self-confidence and to build a positive future. She found her passion and her purpose. ACCESS helped guide her along this pathway to success and she is thankful to ACCESS for the opportunity to achieve her goals. She will continue to work with all minorities in the skilled trades such as women, youth, and Indigenous peoples to create a more diverse and inclusive environment in industry.

1,465  
CLIENTS SERVED

318  
COMMUNITIES  
ACROSS TURTLE ISLAND

57%  
EMPLOYED OR  
RETURNED TO SCHOOL

ES funds Driver's licence workshops and driving lessons that fit within employment goals. Clients are assessed and referred to ACCESS Programs group training and to ACCESS Trades training.



# ACCESS Youth Services

ACCESS Youth Services (YS) is designed to help Indigenous youth achieve high school graduation and future success in employment and training. Youth programs that are offered throughout the school year are in STEAM enrichment, driver's licensing, driving lessons, and Information Technology. In addition, we offer Spring Break and Summer Programs that engage youth in cultural activities, job readiness, and learning new skills. Successful programs that engage Indigenous youth are the STEAM Program, Canoe Leadership Program for Indigenous Girls, Job Club, and various types of Industry Technology Programs. YS Work Experience opportunities in the summer provide an exceptional

venue for youth to gain valuable work ethics. YS partnerships with the Vancouver and Surrey School districts have enabled us to reach more Indigenous youth and provide tailored services and programs that engage youth in a more impactful way. YS team does presentations to youth and helps with recruitment within the School Districts for youth programs and for funding high school trades training. The Youth Leadership Centre provides wrap around services to enhance youth to stay in school and for the exceptional opportunities to practice and apply life skills while building self-confidence and independence.



**Ciro Alberto Rivera**  
COAST SALISH - TLA'AMIN NATION

Ciro always had an interest in technology and IT and was funded by ACCESS for a Plato Software Tester Program. He took the training and gained invaluable skills and now works with talented individuals in every field of IT. He works in a very supportive and encouraging environment and feels like he belongs. He was hired by Plato after an internship and finds himself very motivated to take on the day and carry out tasks of a software tester.

By going through ACCESS, the training he received has given him the tools to be successful in his career and his personal life. He now feels that he is able to work towards having a career and supporting his family instead of just having a job.

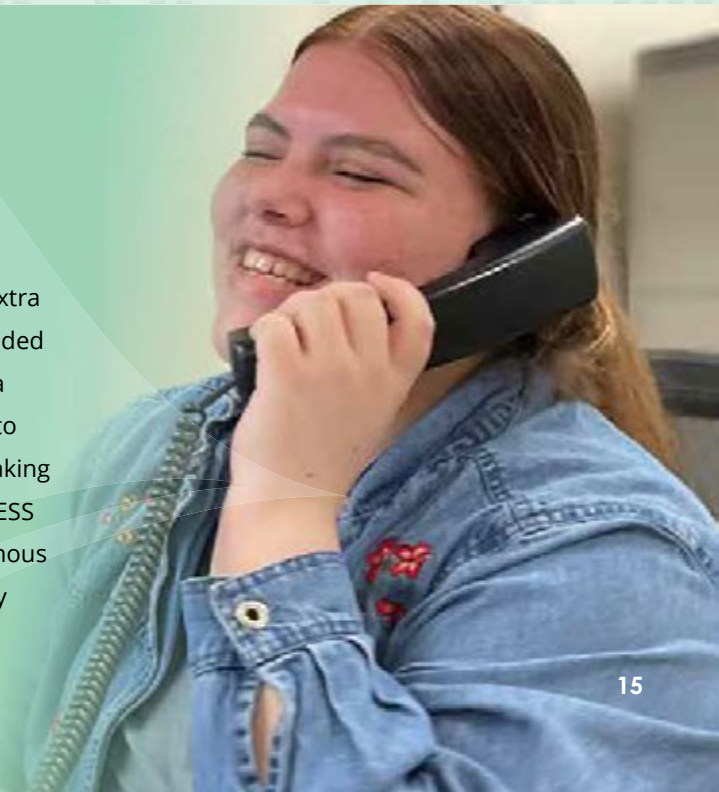


**Amanda Guggins**

Amanda Guggins was one of ACCESS' successful driver's license students. She completed the lessons and road test and is now a fully qualified Class "N" license holder. Amanda states that, "finishing my training and finding work will be so much easier with a Driver's License and I am thankful to ACCESS for all the support they provided".

**Sierra Willard**  
ADAMS LAKE BAND

Sierra was looking for an education option to change careers, so took the ACCESS funded Office Administration and Employment Training Program at Native Education College. She enjoyed the extra support of an Employment Advisor during training, and the provided practicum at ACCESS Indigenous Skills 4 Success (IS4S) gave her a wonderful experience. She took advantage of the support given to her by her employment Advisor and recommends that anyone taking training do the same. She encourages other people to go to ACCESS because she has seen first hand the good they do to help Indigenous people. Sierra was hired after her practicum and she is extremely happy to be able to help clients at the IS4S department.





# ACCESS Trades

The ACCESS Trades department has been providing Indigenous apprenticeship services for Urban Indigenous people in the Lower Mainland since 2005. Our Indigenous-led team consists of three Training and Employment Coaches, two Apprenticeship Advisors, one Trades Coordinator and a Director of Trades and Apprenticeship. Our team provides wrap-around supports, removing barriers for our apprentices in the skilled trades. Clients attend foundation trades training courses and then sign up into the apprenticeship system with SkilledTradesBC. The apprentices then attend all levels of technical training 2, 3, 4 and then write the Red Seal examination. The ACCESS Trades department works closely with 738 apprentices, which includes 157 Red Seal journeypersons in 45 trade designations. ACCESS, through our training partnerships, provides world-class training opportunities at SkilledTradesBC accredited training institutions such as BCIT, EJTC, UAPIC, and VCC.

The ACCESS Trades department would like to acknowledge the many employer partners who support our graduates. Our support system is an important aspect of our model guiding our clients on their trades journey. Employer partners include companies such as Seaspan ULC, Warrior Plumbing, Sasco Contractors Ltd, Mott Electric, Houle Electric, IBEW 213, Sheet Metal Union Local 280, Saam Smit Towage, Marcon Metalfab, RAUTE, BOSA Construction, Ventana Construction, Heatherbrae Construction, William Kelly and Sons, Modern Niagara, Total Energy Systems, National Hydronics Group, and BC Infrastructure Benefits. just to name a few of the companies.

To support Indigenous Youth, ACCESS funds various trades samplers throughout the Greater Vancouver school districts each year. ACCESS also attends career fairs, job fairs and community events to promote the trades.

738 ACTIVE APPRENTICES

157 RED SEAL CERTIFICATIONS

45 TRADE DESIGNATIONS

68 SINGLE SEAT PURCHASES

ACCESS IS PROUD TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPORTING

49%

OF INDIGENOUS TRADE APPRENTICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

13% WOMEN IN TRADES!

“I started a career in Trades to become a Heavy Equipment Operator because it’s something I’ve wanted to do for a long time and it’s fun! The training completely changed my life. ACCESS has provided me with an amazing opportunity which I am extremely grateful for. Indigenous Skills 4 Success (IS4S) was a gentle reintroduction to going to school and studying again for me. ACCESS also provided me with a living allowance which ended up being very helpful as I was able to attend 100% without having to split my time working. This allowed me to get the full benefit of the training program.” - RUBY “KARISSA” PAUL





## Gabriel Ostrowidzki

Prior to finding ACCESS, Gabriel was directionless, financially unstable and going into the trades seemed like the only way to move forward. Life was honestly very difficult for him. Barely able to afford to eat or purchase groceries and thinking that he would never be able to afford his own place, Gabriel originally decided to pursue Machinist training and received his Red Seal Ticket. With the encouragement of his employer, Gabriel then became dual ticketed as a Millwright increasing his skillset. This has opened many opportunities that Gabriel thought would never be attainable. He has been able to have some investment properties and was able to purchase his own townhouse.

**(ACCESS has been) an incredibly helpful organization that offers a tremendous amount of support going for your ticket. I would strongly recommend and advise any Indigenous people interested in pursuing trades to reach out to ACCESS. - GABRIEL OSTROWIDZKI**

## Heat Laliberte

After obtaining his levels 1 and 2 in Culinary Arts, Heat's confidence was boosted, and it revived his passion in cooking. He attended San Francisco's Chefs Food and Wine Festival and then after winning employee of the year at the Fairmont Vancouver, traveled to France where he ate his way across the country. When Heat returned from France, he then started his own artisan bacon business and was named one of the top 50 Entrepreneurs on Turtle Island from the Native Business Magazine. He then sold his business to focus on the completion of his Professional Cook Red Seal Certification. Heat's future is looking bright; he is currently working at Friendship Catering at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre and can see himself as an Executive Chef Running a non-profit kitchen and mentoring cooks to achieve their Red Seals into the future.



## Ruby "Karissa" Paul

Ruby is from the ShiShalh Nation and came to ACCESS motivated and focused on working with machines as a passion. Ruby was a dedicated student during her training as a Heavy Equipment Operator. She thrived on the machines and developed confidence and trust from her classmates and instructors early and often. Her job coach was thrilled with her complete level as she really represented ACCESS and her nation proudly taking top student honors upon completion of her program. Ruby was hired after graduation with Kiewit as they were impressed by her mechanical aptitude and professional nature.

**ACCESS Trades is an amazing program that has given me the opportunity not only have a successful career but to learn a lot about myself and the trades. - SACHA LEW**

## Sacha Lew

Sacha wanted to have a hands-on career that positively contributes to our indigenous communities and chose plumbing as his career path. This training has positively impacted Sacha's life by teaching him not only real-life physical skills but also giving him interpersonal skills for working positively and in a constructive way with people and communities. ACCESS Trades were able to support Sacha with extra funding for living expenses while he got the chance to go to school, while also providing amazing coaching supports to help with anything that he required in-order to be successful while in technical training.





# ACCESS Indigenous Skills 4 Success (IS4S)

ACCESS-IS4S empowers our Indigenous learners through training and skill development. During this past year we developed and delivered nine successful training and employment programs. Our commitment to supporting Indigenous learners remains steadfast as we continue to facilitate opportunities for growth, learning, and advancement.

ACCESS-IS4S once again partnered with ICBC to develop and deliver a third program that trained the learners with the necessary skills to ably compete for job opportunities in multiple departments within ICBC. Due to our continued partnership with ICBC and high interest in the program, ACCESS-IS4S had a full cohort of 16 participants start the program. Nine program participants have transitioned to successful employment in the ICBC claims department.

For the second time, ACCESS-IS4S partnered with Burnaby Community & Continuing Education to develop and deliver an Early Childhood Education

Assistant (ECEA) Program. This was a highly successful intake with six of the participants obtaining immediate employment as ECEAs in the Lower Mainland. Additionally, three participants decided to further their training and went on to complete their Early Childhood Education Certificate.

ACCESS-IS4S also collaborated with ACCESS Trades to provide seven 8-week skills for success programs tailored for Indigenous learners before their technical trades training. IS4S designed and delivered these programs, focusing on foundational skills such as numeracy, document use, and writing, which are essential for their technical training. The curriculum was meticulously crafted by integrating each trade's Skills for Success profile and authentic documents that students would use during their training. This approach prepares learners to develop strong foundational skills to set them up for success in their technical training and beyond.



**Our programs focus on building foundational skills by acknowledging existing skills and fostering the development of new ones. The Indigenous Skills 4 Success Program bridges the gap for Indigenous learners, providing a pathway to successful and meaningful careers.**

9 PROGRAMS THIS YEAR

95%

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED TRAINING

70%

HIED WITH EMPLOYER

1 ICBC EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

1 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ASSISTANT PROGRAM

100%

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED IS4S TRAINING

94%

WENT ON TO FURTHER TRAINING

7 PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS





## Jennifer Lindsay

DOG RIB RAE FIRST NATION (NWT)

Jennifer, 40, sought a career change from her physically demanding warehouse job. Through her daughter’s participation in another ACCESS program, Bladerunners, Jennifer discovered the ICBC employer partnership program, advertised on Facebook. Motivated by the desire for a less physically demanding job and inspired by the opportunity, Jennifer enrolled in the program. Over the 8-weeks, she gained valuable skills, confidence, and support from the program. With newfound confidence and training, Jennifer secured a position at ICBC in the Claims Department, a career opportunity she previously deemed unattainable. She praises the program for its effectiveness in providing skills and support, recommending it to friends and family facing employment challenges. Overall, the program transformed Jennifer’s life, giving her a sense of purpose and a promising future.

## Jacob Gallagher

TLA’MIA FIRST NATION (BC)

Jacob, 26, found himself yearning for a change. Living in Vancouver, desiring to explore new career opportunities, he visited ACCESS and met with an advisor. Jacob, initially apprehensive about leaving his job, found the courage to take a leap. His friend from a previous workplace had mentioned the program, and it resonated with Jacob’s aspirations.

IS4S equipped Jacob with skills needed to pursue a new career path and empowered him to return to schooling, something he previously thought daunting. Beyond upskilling, the IS4S program offered valuable introspection, Jacob gained a deeper understanding of himself.

Jacob describes the program as “an amazing learning opportunity.” He wholeheartedly recommends it to anyone seeking a fresh start in life, emphasizing its immense benefit for those charting a new course. Jacob’s story is an inspiring testament to IS4S’ ability to empower individuals to chase their dreams.



## Lindsay Leech

TSLEIL-WAUTUTH NATION (BC)

Lindsay, 28, loved her work as a veterinary receptionist, but the limited income left her feeling unfulfilled. Inspired by her father, a Pipefitter by trade, and her partner, a welder, she enrolled in the Pipefitting Foundations program through ACCESS. This marked a turning point for Lindsay – she started to embrace the opportunity for a new career with a supportive network, paving the way for a brighter future.

Entering the Pipefitting Foundations program was a pivotal moment as the self-doubt began to fade, replaced by a quiet confidence - but one thing was certain – she was on a new path, a path paved with purpose, security, and the promise of a job well done.

**“The experience I had at IS4S was so welcoming. The variety of things we learned were great. I learned a lot about my strengths and things to work on. I was nervous coming here on my first day but by the end of the program I was comfortable with the program and classmates.” - LINDSAY LEECH**

## Mariah Pascal

LIL’WAT NATION

Mariah, 21, enrolled in the ACCESS-IS4S Program to prepare for a career in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Mariah, who found the program through Facebook, saw it as a way to strengthen her foundational skills before entering a full-time ECE program. The ECEA program was a great step toward her long-term educational goal.

Mariah highlights the supportive staff and their willingness to adapt teaching for better understanding. By participating in the IS4S Program, Mariah gained the skills and confidence necessary to pursue her dream career in Early Childhood Education. She left the program feeling empowered, with a renewed sense of direction and a strong foundation for success in her chosen field. In 2024 she successfully completed her Early Childhood Education Certificate.





# ACCESS Programs

The Programs department oversees training projects delivered by urban Indigenous organizations in Metro Vancouver or through partnerships with public training providers. These project-based training initiatives are designed to assist Indigenous people to enter the workforce directly or to pursue

post-secondary education that will eventually lead to future career placements. The training projects respond to local labour market needs. Projects funded may include group skills training, pre-employment training, employer partnership training, and summer student employment programs.



10 GROUP TRAINING PROGRAMS

- 8 GROUP SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS
- 1 EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM
- 1 YOUTH MENTORSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

84% SUCCESS RATE

136 CLIENTS ENROLLED IN GROUP TRAINING

14 CLIENTS IN PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

19 SUMMER STUDENTS PLACED IN 7 INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

**“Gratitude fills my heart as I reflect on the journey ACCESS has paved for me. Their unwavering support has enabled me to pursue my dreams in the global makeup program at Blanche Macdonald. From a little girl with big aspirations that seemed impossible, ACCESS has made the impossible possible. - LINDSAY TANNER**





## Janelle Fowlie-Nicholas

OJIBWAY CHIPPEWAS (ONT)

Janelle, 31, was browsing Facebook and was asking herself “What’s next?” for her career when an ad for the ACCESS ICBC Customer Contact Representative popped up. She thought “Cozy office job that I can retire in and still work with the public. I’m in”.

The training ACCESS provided Janelle was informative, and supportive, and has provided her with the necessary tools and resources to be successful in her job interview with ICBC. ACCESS created an open, accepting space where she felt comfy throughout the process.

Since completing the ACCESS program Janelle has achieved notable career milestones like securing immediate employment with ICBC and embracing her indigenous heritage. These successes mark the beginning of her professional journey as an ICBC Customer Contact Representative.

## Aliyah McIvor

Aliyah McIvor, a 22-year-old Cree woman from Vancouver, BC, stumbled upon the ACCESS Early Childhood Education Assistance (ECEA) program on Facebook, sparking her passion for teaching. Enrolling without hesitation, she embarked on her journey towards becoming an educator.

The program gave Aliyah invaluable skills, igniting her enthusiasm for Early Childhood Education. Now, she aims to earn the Early Childhood Education Certificate at Burnaby Community & Continuing Education.

Throughout her training, Aliyah found joy in creating nurturing environments that foster children’s growth. She envisions lively classrooms where learning is an adventure every day.

Grateful for ACCESS staff support, Aliyah credits them for her successful career start. She is determined to make a difference in children’s lives, shaping the future one young mind at a time.



## George Thompson

George Thompson, aged thirty-two, is of Haida descent. He was referred to the Wild Land Fire Fighter program by a family member who was enrolled in an ACCESS program.

At the time, George found himself in between jobs, and the prospect of firefighting appealed to him greatly; it was something he had always wanted to try.

Completing the Wild Land Fire Fighting program proved to be transformative for George. Once certified, he swiftly secured employment, landing a position in Prince George. This opportunity allowed him to explore more of British Columbia while working in firefighting and opened new avenues for him.

George recommends ACCESS to anyone looking to enhance their skills and advance in their careers. He views ACCESS as a valuable stepping stone for further education or career initiation. Additionally, he praises the supportive ACCESS staff, emphasizing their kindness and readiness to assist, which facilitates goal achievement and knowledge acquisition.

## Mario Manitowabi

Mario Manitowabi, a 30-year-old Odawa Ojibwe from Wikwemikong, Ontario, stumbled upon a poster for the Construction Safety Officer (CSO) program at the Vancouver Friendship Centre, aligning perfectly with his career aspirations. This discovery came as a stroke of luck since he was considering alternative employment options. The poster advertised CSO training and an OFA Level 3 first aid certificate at no cost, essential credentials for him. The CSO training served as a pivotal stepping stone, solidifying his foundation and opening doors to new opportunities. Now, Mario has been hired by Seaspan as a Safety Advisor, a testament to the program’s effectiveness. Mario expresses gratitude towards ACCESS, acknowledging their role in setting him up for success. He extends a heartfelt Chi-Miigwech (big thank you) to the ACCESS team, acknowledging the profound impact their support has had on his life, despite joining at the last minute.





# ACCESS BladeRunners

ACCESS BladeRunners, initiated by community-minded individuals in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, serves as a vital link connecting the construction industry's needs with opportunities for at-risk youth, with an Indigenous priority, aged between 16 and 30 in the Greater Vancouver area. With a dedicated team providing daily support, the program identifies, assists, and helps overcome barriers to employment—a cornerstone of its award-winning approach.

In addition to providing life skills training and health and safety education, the program offers support for up to a year, successfully placing at-risk youth into employment with supportive employer partners. Since its inception in 1994, BladeRunners has positively impacted thousands of participants in British Columbia. This success is attributed to a particular screening process ensuring youth readiness, tailored pre-employment training, proactive local partnerships within the construction community, and a comprehensive array of support services, including access to housing, education, food, clothing, work gear, wrap-around care, and other essential assistance.

Additionally, we take great pride in highlighting the outstanding efforts of our ongoing numerous community partners in serving youth across 15 provincial communities, extending to many areas of Vancouver Island and Northern regions beyond Vancouver.

In addition to our core program, ACCESS BladeRunners operates BladeRunner's Place, an innovative housing initiative providing 38 units of subsidized housing to program graduates ready to take the next steps toward independence.

The program's success owes much to the generous support of our funders, notably the Province of British Columbia, particularly the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education & Future Skills (PSFS), and Service Canada.

We are also immensely grateful to the employers who hire our youths. Companies such as Coast Salish Steel, Nucor Harris Rebar, Starline Windows, and OZZ Electric (to name a few) play a pivotal role in our success.







## Blaine Ross

Blaine Ross, a proud member of the Haisla Nation born in Kitimat, BC, began his path to success with the BladeRunners program. Charismatic and hardworking, Blaine quickly became known for his infectious laughter and reliability. His journey through the construction industry with BCIB led him to the role of foreman, where his dedication and leadership shone. Beyond his professional achievements, Blaine thrived at BladeRunner's Place housing, refining his life skills. Through perseverance, he secured long-term housing with our partner The Bloom Group, marking a significant milestone in May 2024. Blaine's story is one of inspiration, highlighting the rewards of hard work. BladeRunners celebrates his remarkable progress, recognizing his enduring dedication and impact.

## Marshall Nanaquewitang

Marshall Nanaquewitang excelled in his BladeRunners program, expressing gratitude throughout. Following his training, Marshall lost contact with us and was out of touch until a chance encounter on Commercial Drive revealed his departure from a department store job. Recognizing his potential, his job coach swiftly connected him with Greer Insulation LTD in August 2023.

Since then, Marshall has thrived, showcasing unwavering dedication, punctuality, and a genuine passion for his work. His employer applauds his strong work ethic and commitment to excellence.

Marshall's journey underscores the transformative impact of opportunity and perseverance. At BladeRunners, we celebrate his achievements and remain committed to supporting his path to a brighter future.



## Caeleb Stephens

Caeleb Stephens, hailing from Greenville, BC, deeply cherishes his Nisga'a culture, though his family's relocation to the lower mainland during his elementary years posed a challenge. Raised in a tight-knit family, he absorbed the rich traditions of his heritage, which continue to shape his life. Initially, Caeleb engaged with the BladeRunners program but didn't feel prepared for employment. Yet, returning later, he completed it successfully, armed with newfound determination. Applying the acquired skills, he smoothly transitioned to a full-time role at Thermal Systems, diligently saving for independent living. Grateful for the unwavering support of his job coordinators, he now aims to inspire his younger siblings with his journey, showcasing the rewards of perseverance and hard work.

**“It was amazing to feel support from such genuine and strong workers, BladeRunners helped me overcome my self-doubt that held me back. Following the program, I was able to take on opportunities to better my future.”- SHAYLA BROWN**

## Shayla Brown

Shayla Brown, from the Musqueam nation, was born and raised in Vancouver. After graduating high school, Shayla found herself without a routine or a clear sense of direction. The BladeRunners program provided her with a sense of community and the skills needed to gain employment and stability.

One of Shayla's biggest barriers was her trauma and the struggles associated with being an Urban Indigenous woman. During the life skills week of training, many of her questions were answered. She gained valuable knowledge from the guest speakers and workshops.

BladeRunners emphasized the importance of punctuality and daily attendance. With her new skills and the job coaches support, Shayla has been a full-time employee at LMS Reinforcing Steel Group and has her own home through BladeRunner's housing.





# Urban Spirit Foundation



The Urban Spirit Foundation (USF) is a charitable organization that exists to further the success and self-reliance of Urban Indigenous people in the Metro Vancouver Region. USF was created in 2007 by the founders of ACCESS, and with ACCESS' support all funds raised by USF go directly to our purpose with no administration fee. We are united in our purpose, with the Foundation working to grow philanthropic resources to provide education and employment training opportunities, secondary and post-secondary scholarships and bursaries, and community-based programs and projects that move people from poverty to self-sufficiency.

In what seems like a short time since, we have worked to create our vision, build our leadership, support our

local community, and engage with people who have been so moved by our purpose that they have made valued contributions of many kinds.

Annually, USF supports the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre's Children's Back-to-School Backpack Program. Children receive a backpack filled with school supplies needed to start the new school year. USF also supports the VAFCS (Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society) Children's Christmas Party where low-income families receive a food hamper, and each child receives a present to open on Christmas morning. Each year for Giving Tuesday, USF has the Chili and Bannock Lunch-To-Go Fundraiser and the Annual USF Charity Golf Classic Tournament.



Since 2010 we have provided more than 172 scholarships totaling over \$164,000







## Heaven Makokis

Heaven Makokis is from Saddle Creek First Nation in Saskatchewan. She attended Tamanawis Secondary High School in Surrey. Heaven is pursuing a business career in the construction industry and will be attending Kwantlen College.

**“Merging my passion for business with my interest in construction, I aim to land a dynamic and impactful business-oriented role in this field. I can’t thank you enough for this incredible opportunity, and I am committed to making the most out of it.”**

## Wakenniosta (Rosie) Cooper

Wakenniosta Rosie Cooper is Mohawk of the Kanesatake, and she started her training through ACCESS, it has changed her life and provided her with a lifelong career that is very fulfilling. She cannot see herself working in any other field now! Since 2018, Wakenniosta has won countless awards from outstanding graduate, apprentice of the year, high achievement award for level 2 of her apprenticeship, and second place at the BC Skills competition for electrical wiring in 2023.

Wakenniosta received the Urban Spirit Foundation Scholarship after finishing her fourth year of Electrical. “Urban Spirit Foundation and ACCESS are great resources for the Indigenous community. They assisted me in identifying my career goals and provided support since 2018!

“Thanks to Urban Spirit Foundation for the scholarship, it helped me feel great about finishing my studies. Hopefully, I will win Foreman of the Year in the future!”



## Kenton Dalaney

Kenton Dalaney is twenty-three, Blackfoot, Kanina Blood Tribe from Alberta. Kenton completed the ACCESS Sheet Metal worker program and is currently employed with Modern Niagara. Kenton is working on the construction of the new St Paul’s Hospital, and he is thankful for his career opportunity, and he is also attending school part time towards his degree. Kenton plans to complete his Red Seal and move back home and have/start his own business. The Urban Spirit Foundation award has helped him on his journey towards more education and he is thankful for the support and encouragement towards his future goals.

## Tanis Wilson

Tanis Wilson is Cree from Constance Lake First Nations in Ontario. Constance received the Urban Spirit Award to recognize her hard work and commitment to her program of studies.

“Miigwetch Urban Spirit Foundation for my award in 2023! As a single student living in Vancouver, finances can cause burdens or stress because the city is expensive, and I am unable to work during the school year. Awards such as yours relieve financial stress, therefore, I am very grateful.

In April 2024, I completed Nicola Valley Institute of Technology’s Bachelor of Social Work with a specialization in Indigenous health care. I am happy to share that I will be continuing my education in the Juris Doctor (law degree) program at The University of British Columbia in September 2024. “



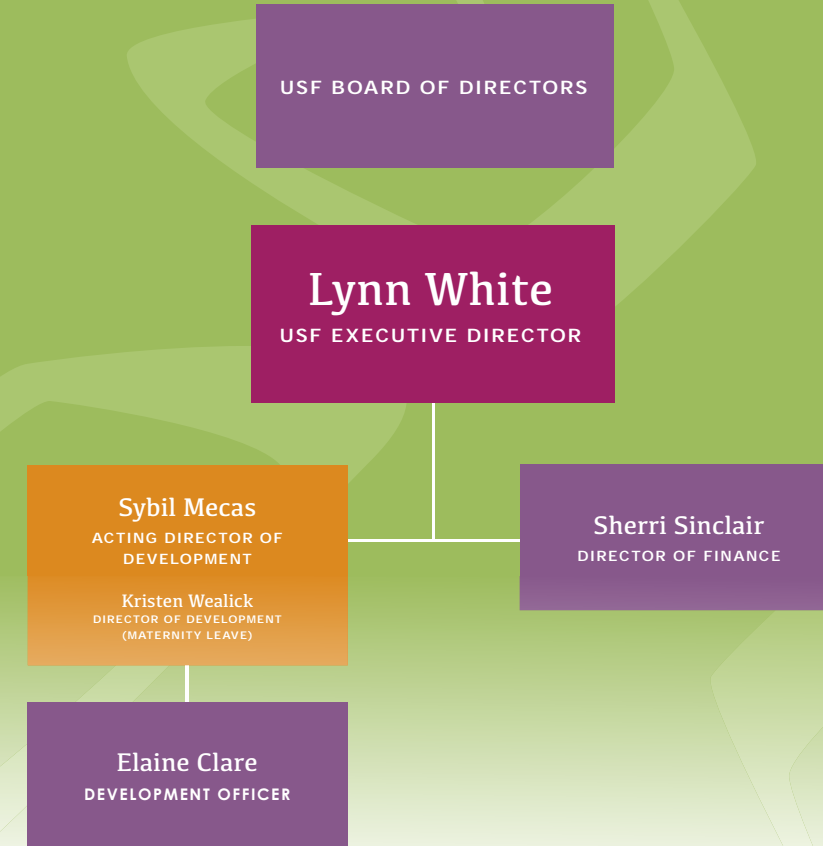


# Board of Directors



<p><b>Olivia Jim</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Helping Spirit Lodge Society</p>		<p><b>Jenna Forbes</b> USF CHAIR</p> <hr/> <p>Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society</p>
<p><b>Ross Ramsey</b> USF VICE-CHAIR</p> <hr/> <p>Community Member (USF Founding Member)</p>		<p><b>Stewart Anderson</b> USF SECRETARY-TREASURER</p> <hr/> <p>Community Member</p>
<p><b>Lou Demerais</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Community Leader</p>		<p><b>Susan Tatoosh</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society (USF Founding Member)</p>
<p><b>Nick Calla</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Calla Financial</p>		<p><b>Francesca de Bastiani</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>Community Member</p>
		<p><b>Samantha Singbeil</b> USF DIRECTOR</p> <hr/> <p>FortisBC</p>
		

# Organization Chart



We would like to thank our donors







## 2023-24 Audit Finance Department

Our Finance Department consists of five employees. We pride ourselves in being accurate, timely, and efficient, yet flexible in our relations with clients, employees, and vendors.

ACCESS and Urban Spirit Foundation are audited annually by an independent auditor in accordance with the Canadian Accounting Standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Details of the ACCESS audit are available on our website at [www.accessfutures.com](http://www.accessfutures.com)





**ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CAREER EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SOCIETY (ACCESS)**  
**Statement of Financial Position**  
**March 31, 2024**

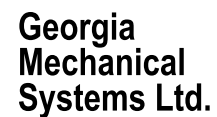
	2024	2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 5,254,324	\$ 4,863,628
Accounts receivable (Note 5)	1,032,885	1,455,886
GST receivable	279,416	245,100
Prepaid expenses	151,112	101,009
	<u>6,717,737</u>	<u>6,665,623</u>
PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT (Note 3)	<u>3,815,356</u>	<u>3,863,998</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$ 10,533,093</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 10,529,621</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 2,131,449	\$ 547,696
Wages payable	41,940	40,656
Employee deductions payable	10,336	10,052
Deferred revenue (Note 4)	3,135,461	5,010,431
Current portion of mortgage payable (Note 6)	1,323,415	42,752
	<u>6,642,601</u>	<u>5,651,587</u>
MORTGAGE PAYABLE (Note 6)	<u>-</u>	<u>1,323,661</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b><u>6,642,601</u></b>	<b><u>6,975,248</u></b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Unrestricted contributions	1,398,552	1,056,790
Invested in capital assets	2,491,940	2,497,583
	<u>3,890,492</u>	<u>3,554,373</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$ 10,533,093</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 10,529,621</u></b>
<b>LEASE COMMITMENTS (Note 7)</b>		

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

 Director  
 Director



# Thank you to our partners!







**For more information:**

**Aboriginal Community  
Career Employment Services Society**

Tel. (604) 913-7933

[www.accessfutures.com](http://www.accessfutures.com)