vancouver
foundation

Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund Application Guide

This guide explains the purpose, timeline, eligibility criteria and how to apply. We encourage you to read it in its entirety to see if the Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund is right for your community or organization.

Table of Contents

vancouver
foundation

About Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund

Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund (TISF) provides lexible, multi-year grants to **land-based First Nations**, including **Hereditary Groups**, and **Indigenous-led organizations** serving land-based First Nations and/or Hereditary Groups in the territories now known as British Columbia (BC).

PURPOSE OF FUNDING

These grants were designed to support Indigenous-led initiatives focused on healing, land, rights & responsibilities, and culture.

The TISF will support work that creates the conditions for **systemic transformation** by preserving, evolving, and transforming the social, political, economic and cultural systems of Indigenous communities in BC.

AVAILABLE GRANTS

Approximately $6 million in funding will be awarded. Each grant will provide up to $100,000 per year over three years to support Indigenous-led initiatives focused on healing, land, rights and responsibilities, and culture.

vancouver foundation

Key Dates

APRIL 22, 2025

Stage 1 applications open.

MAY 21, 2025

Stage 1 applications close at 5 pm PT.

MAY 22 TO END OF JULY 2025

Stage 1 applications reviewed by Vancouver Foundation staff and Indigenous Priorities Advisory Council to confirm eligibility and alignment with the funding purpose and priorities.

END OF JULY 2025

Invitations sent via email to select organizations to submit a Stage 2 application (oral or written submission). Declined applicants from Stage 1 will also be notified by email.

END OF AUGUST 2025

Stage 2 applications close.

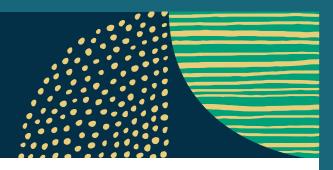**SEPTEMBER 2025 TO OCTOBER 2025**

Stage 2 applications reviewed by Vancouver Foundation staff and Indigenous Priorities Advisory Council.

END OF OCTOBER 2025

Final funding decisions communicated via email.

vancouver foundation

Funding Priorities

The funding priorities of TISF were developed from our engagement with community, to understand and address the systemic issues impacting Indigenous communities in BC.

TISF grant applications will be assessed and prioritized for funding based on their alignment to one or more of the following five priorities:

Priority 1: Initiatives that center at least one of the four focus areas:

Healing

• Repairing, restoring, and nurturing kinship systems
• Addressing inequities in the social determinants of health in Indigenous communities
• Healing and reconnection to culture, community, and all our relations
• Group healing and conflict resolution including addressing lateral violence using Indigenous methods and perspectives

Land

• Community connection to land
• Protecting sacred homelands
• Climate change adaptation & mitigation
• Environmental protection
• Indigenous sovereignty over lands and resources
• Food security and sovereignty
• Sustainable economic development

Rights & Responsibilities

• Asserting inherent and human rights
• Strengthening your ancestral roles and responsibilities
• Policy changes and advocacy
• Traditional governance
• Governance capacity through research
• Policy development and staffing

Culture

• Language and cultural revitalization programs as the foundation for Indigenous solution building
• Revitalizing cultural practices that are inclusive of allcommunity members who identify as:
  • LGTBQIA+ and/or Two Spirit
  • Gender-diverse
  • Disabled
  • Neurodiverse
  • On-reserve or off-reserve

vancouver foundation

Priority 2: Work that uses or is revitalizing culturally specific Indigenous governance systems and/or implementing Indigenous-led decolonial practices, like:

- Centering Indigenous cultural practices at the heart of their activities
- Revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in their daily practices
- Addressing your First Nation's inherent right to self-government
- Supporting traditional governance structures like Hereditary Groups
- Uplifting your First Nation's work that asserts self-determination

Priority 3: Work that has historically been denied funding and continues to experience barriers, such as:

- Projects and initiatives excluded from established and existing channels of support, government funding and
- Initiatives that uphold and assert a First Nation's rights through **section 35 of the Canadian Constitution**
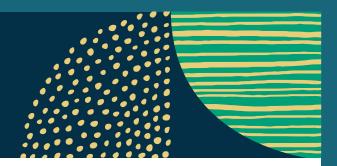
Priority 4: Initiatives that identify and address colonial structures and systems to heal injustices, like:

- The overrepresentation of Indigenous children in foster care and Indigenous people in the justice system
- Social determinants of health
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)
- Underfunding of infrastructure and programming in land-based communities

Priority 5: Nations or organizations that can clearly define their markers of success and the values that guide their work, such as:

- Including the communities they serve when defining their goals and priorities
- Celebrating their markers of success in culturally relevant ways
- Embedding community voices in decision-making processes

vancouver foundation

Eligibility

To be eligible for a TISF grant, your organization's primary purpose must be for __community benefit__ AND, you must meet one of the following criteria:
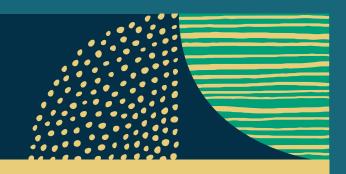
- **Land-based First Nations**, including **Hereditary Groups** in the territories known as British Columbia (BC)

- An **Indigenous-led organization** serving land-based First Nations or Hereditary Groups located in BC that is either:

  - A registered **qualified donee** by the Canada Revenue Agency or,
  - A r**egistered non-profit society** (including **community service co-operatives**) operating in British Columbia since August 1, 2024.
  - A non-profit society operating in British Columbia since August 1, 2024, that is in the process of becoming registered and will have society registration by June 1, 2025.

EXAMPLES OF INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Individuals
- Non-Indigenous-led organizations, including:
  - Academic institutions,
  - School districts,
  - Religious organizations,
  - Government agencies,
  - Any other organization that does not meet our definition of being an Indigenous-led organization
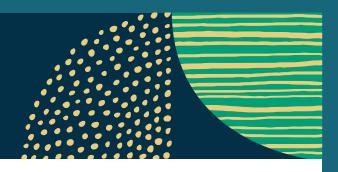
vancouver
foundation

Eligibility

- Operating costs
- Capacity building
- Elder and knowledge keeper support
- Gender-specific support groups
- Advocacy
- Governance capacity through research
- Policy development
- Cultural mentorship / preservation / transmission of cultural knowledge
- Staff wellness, or other initiatives addressing burn out
- Intergenerational learning
- Cultural healing
- Ceremonial practices
- Community events
- Land-based programs

Please note: Other activities and capital requests like costs associated with equipment, technology or renovations will be considered if they are required to advance your work within the funding priorities.

- Activities and projects that take place, or benefit communities, primarily outside of BC
- Endowment funds or capital campaigns
- Operating deficits or after-the-fact support
- Debt retirement
- Monetary reserves
- Mortgage pay-downs
- Large public infrastructure projects
- Individuals
- Endowments
- Operating deficits or after-the-fact support
- **Activities deemed not charitable** as defined by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

vancouver
foundation

How to Apply

STEP 1:

After reading the TISF application guide, confirm eligibility by completing the online **Eligibility Quiz**

STEP 2:

The applications open on April 22. Log into the online <u>grant management system</u> to access the Stage 1 online application.

- **Returning users:** If you've applied for a Vancouver Foundation grant before, you can log in with your username and password.

- **For new users:** If you've never applied for a grant using this system, please create a profile by selecting "Register Here" at the top left of your screen. Watch **How To Create a User Account video** which walks you through this process.

Forgot your password? Follow the instructions on the login page to reset your password. Check your spam/ junk email folder in case the password rest email was sent there.

STEP 3:

Once inside the online grant management system, navigate to the "Apply" section (top right-hand corner of the screen) and select **2025 TISF** to apply.

STEP 4:

Complete and submit your Stage 1 online application by May 21, 2025, at 5 pm PT. You'll receive a confirmation email from "@smartsimple.ca" as receipt of your application submission

vancouver
foundation

STEP 5:

Wait for decision via email by July 2025.

If your organization is invited to submit a Stage 2 application, continue to step 6.

STEP 6:

Complete and submit your Stage 2 written application or complete your scheduled oral application, based on your selection made in step 6 by August 25, 2025.

STEP 7:

Complete and submit your Stage 2 application or attend your scheduled oral Stage 2 application (based on your selection made in step 6).

STEP 8:

Wait for the final decision communicated via email by the end of October 2025.

Selection Process

All TISF applications will be reviewed and adjudicated by Vancouver Foundation staff and the Indigenous Priorities Advisory Council (IPAC) to confirm eligibility and alignment to TISF funding priorities.

After Stage 1 closes on May 21, all TISF applicants will be notified via email by the end of July whether or not they've been invited to Stage 2. Final funding decisions will be communicated via email by the end of October 2025.

vancouver
foundation

Reporting Requirements for Grant Recipients

Reporting is required for all grants made to **non-qualified donees/ organizations** (including some land-based First Nations, **Hereditary Groups, registered non-profit societies** and **community service cooperatives**) outlined by the Canada Revenue Agency's reporting requirements. More information will be provided to awarded recipients when final decisions are communicated.

Grants to qualified donees do not require formal reporting. Instead, we've created an optional opportunity for organizations to connect with us to share their experience and discuss their priorities and challenges.

Contact

Need help confirming eligibility or navigating the application portal?

Please email us at **indigenous.priorities@vancouverfoundation.ca** and one of our granting team members will follow-up with you.

Please allow at least 2-5 business days for one of our staff to get back to you.

vancouver
foundation

Glossary of Terms

Vancouver Foundation acknowledges that terminology and definitions, particularly regarding identities, are complex. Identities are more than just words—they hold meaning and have different relationships to power, shaped by various cultural contexts.

This Glossary of Key Terms draws upon various community resources and knowledge to provide shared understanding and language. It is meant to guide applicants while applying for the Thriving Indigenous Systems Fund (TISF) grants program.

Colonize (v.), Colonization (n.) occurs when a new group takes control over the indigenous people of an area. Indigenous group. The colonizing group brings their own culture, religion, and laws, often making rules that benefit themselves while harming Indigenous communities. They take land and control resources and trade. Many Indigenous people today are still affected by colonization and continue to fight for their rights and independence.

Colonial Structures reference when Europeans arrived, they created systems to control Indigenous people in areas like economy, education, laws, and traditions. These systems caused lasting harm, including residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the high number of Indigenous children in foster care. These policies separated Indigenous people from their culture, families, and lands.

Decolonized approaches center the cultural worldviews of Indigenous communities and prioritize Indigenous self-determination.

Elder(s) are cherished and respected in Indigenous cultures. They are not simply aging people; instead, they are deeply knowledgeable about their culture's history, values, and teachings and play a key role in passing along oral histories.

First Nations refers to Indigenous people in Canada who do not identify as Inuit or Métis.

Hereditary Groups are collectives of Indigenous people organized and guided by traditional governance principles and practices. These groups can include Houses, Huwilp, Clans, and other forms of hereditary governments. In many communities, multiple families form a House or Wilp (plural is Huwilp). Multiple Huwilp forms a Clan, and multiple Clans form a Nation.

Indigenous is Canada's preferred term for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. It replaces the older term "Aboriginal." Some regions or individuals may prefer different terms.

Indigenous-led organization are organizations that:

- Have at least two-thirds (67%) of senior staff, leadership team, and/or board/non-conventional governance structures held by individuals who identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit*,
- Can define how Indigenous ancestry is verified,
- Have agreements in place with the land-based First Nation(s) being served,
- Engage the First Nation(s) in a way that honours their self-determination,
- Are rooted in Indigenous history and values,
- Have programs that Indigenous people deliver and,
- Follow formal protocols with Indigenous communities.

> ***Example of an Indigenous-led organization:***
> *An organization has five board members and four senior staff (for a total of nine). Three of the board members identify as First Nations, and three of the staff identify as First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. This organization is Indigenous-led because at least 67% (or two-thirds) of both the board and senior staff are Indigenous (six out of nine).*

Indigenous identity fraud is an increasingly emerging issue and a harmful result of colonization. When organizations rely on self-identification only, it can invite identity fraud in the following ways:

- Complete dishonesty (no Indigenous ancestry)
- Claiming identity-based on distant archival ancestors
- The person involved has no ongoing extended familial connection to an Indigenous community, and no reason for being disconnected (60's Scoop, millennial Scoop, foster care, etc.)

If you have additional questions, please email us at **indigenous.priorities@vancouverfoundation.ca.**

Inuit are a group of Indigenous peoples living in the northern regions of Canada, Greenland, and Alaska.

Kinship refers to the relational networks among individuals, including families, clans, and broader affiliations. In contemporary society, it extends to chosen families and communities that share mutual experiences and support.

Land-Based First Nations: are deeply rooted in specific territories or regions. These groups include Indigenous Governing Bodies, such as bands, reserves, elected bodies, and traditional or hereditary groups.

LGTBQIA2S means Lesbian, Gay, Trans, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual & Aromantic, Two-Spirit.

Privilege is a set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into a specific social group. Individuals can be granted privilege based on certain aspects of their identity, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographical location, ability, and religion.

Self-determination is a Nation's right to choose its own government and decide its own economic, social and cultural development.

Settler refers to someone who is not Indigenous but lives on Indigenous land

Systemic Transformation in an Indigenous context is work that is considered disruptive and often asserts the basic human rights of Indigenous people. Indigenous systems, both historical and current, have been deeply influenced by colonization. Indigenous-led work that identifies, addresses, or disrupts colonial influences can be viewed as a reconstruction of our cultural systems and is not disruptive from an Indigenous worldview

Traditional Governance refers to the culturally specific structures, systems, and processes an Indigenous community uses to make decisions, engage in economic and social activities, and define the roles and responsibilities of its leaders. First Nations were sovereign Nations before European contact. Indigenous-specific forms of governance vary from Nation to Nation, with legal, political, economic, and social systems and a spiritual way of life.

Examples of Traditional Governance:

- Centering Indigenous cultural practices at the heart of their activities
- Revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in their daily practices
- Addressing their First Nation's inherent right to self-government
- Supporting Hereditary Groups, including Houses, Huwilp, Clans and other forms of hereditary governments
- Developing traditional governance structures, including houses, groups and or organizations
- Uplifting the First Nation's work that asserts self-determination

Trust-Based Philanthropy is an approach to giving that addresses the power imbalances between funders, nonprofits, and the communities they serve. It is about redistributing power—systemically, organizationally, and interpersonally—to serve a healthier and more equitable nonprofit ecosystem.

Wilp (singular), Huwilp (plural) is the governance structures of the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en, referring to a house group comprising the title holders within their respective families and clans. Multiple families form a wilp (house), multiple huwilp come together to form a clan, and multiple clans collectively form a nation.