



2025 Grant Recipients

Participatory Action Research Grants



In 2025, Vancouver Foundation's **Participatory Action Research Grants** provided **\$3.4 million to 21 projects**. Two different types of projects were funded: **convene** grants and **investigate** grants.

Convene grants are short-term grants designed to help teams articulate a research question and develop a participatory research project plan that can be submitted to funding organizations in the future. The research projects must unpack a complex health issue and question systemic behaviours that have created that issue or held it in place. Convene grants are a one-stage application.

Investigate grants are multi-year grants designed to help teams answer a research question, analyze their findings, and share knowledge in a way that supports the community to act in the future. Investigate grants have a two-stage application process.

Among the successful applicants, **10 were convene** grant recipients and **11 were investigate** grants recipients.



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Convene Grant Recipients

Organization:
AMENOUGH Society

Partner:
Simon Fraser University

This project examines the mental health impacts of professional displacement among skilled immigrants and refugees in Metro Vancouver. When newcomers are unable to work in their trained professions, they often face the loss of identity, dignity, and economic stability, leading to depression, anxiety, social isolation, and downward mobility. These harms ripple outward, affecting families through intergenerational stress, strained relationships, and reduced economic security. By centering the experiences of immigrants and refugees, the project highlights how credential barriers, systemic discrimination, and labour market exclusion undermine both individual and community well-being. The research aims to generate insights and pathways for systems change that recognize and utilize newcomers' skills — not only as an employment issue, but as a matter of mental health, equity, and belonging.

Organization:
Howe Sound Women's Centre Society

Partner:
University of the Fraser Valley

This convening brings together survivors, academics, and anti-trafficking organizations. Centering survivor leadership from the outset, the group will co-develop research questions, objectives, and methods while examining how social determinants—such as disability, education, employment, housing, race, and gender—contribute to marginalization and vulnerability. Through survivor-led dialogues, a PAR Advisory Research Group, and cross-sector workshops, the convening creates the early collaboration and shared decision-making that are essential to meaningful participatory research and to building a strong, community-driven proposal.

Organization:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

Partner:
Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre Society

This project reimagines what healing from sexual violence can look like beyond traditional trauma or justice-focused approaches that often fail to meet the needs of marginalized survivors. Through survivor-led conversations, particularly with racialized and sexual and gender minority communities, the research explores how healing must also address collective, spiritual, sexual, and physical dimensions. By examining how colonialism, racism, heterosexism, and stigma shape access to care, the project aims to surface decolonized, community-rooted models of support that reflect the full realities and strengths of survivors.

Organization:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

Partner:
Society for Advocacy for Gender-Affirming Healthcare

This project examines how research can strengthen advocacy to improve health and wellbeing for Two-Spirit, trans, and nonbinary (2S/TNB) people in B.C. Despite the proven benefits of gender-affirming care, 2S/TNB people face major barriers rooted in systemic anti-trans bias, gaps in medical education, and limited access to inclusive services. These challenges are compounded by broader social determinants such as poverty, discrimination, and rising anti-trans rhetoric. Through conversations with community advocates, policy and decision-makers, and researchers, the project will identify key systemic barriers and determine where research can most effectively support collective advocacy. A final gathering of 2S/TNB community leaders will help shape community-driven priorities for future research and action.

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Organization:
Aquafit for All Association

Partner:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

This project explores why youth with disabilities lose access to swimming lessons once they age out of children's programs — and how this gap creates safety risks and reflects broader barriers in recreation and health systems. By bringing together youth, families, community groups, and researchers, the project will examine the systemic and policy factors that limit ongoing access to inclusive aquatic programs. Through a collaborative process, participants will co create a research question grounded in lived experience to guide future solutions that support safe, equitable, lifelong access to swimming for youth with disabilities.

Organization:
Simon Fraser University

Partner:
Young Women's Christian Association

This project brings together newcomer communities and cross-sector partners to understand the full range of social determinants shaping newcomer health in B.C. at a time when health and social services are facing significant defunding. By engaging immigrants, refugees, temporary and permanent residents, undocumented people, and asylum seekers, the project will surface the root causes of health inequities and the systemic barriers newcomers encounter. Working collaboratively with community organizations, researchers, and health system leaders, the initiative will lay the foundation for a community-driven research agenda that advances newcomer health, equity, and well-being across the province.

Organization: University of Victoria

Partner:
Campbell River Nurturing Society

This project partners with remote coastal Indigenous communities on Vancouver Island to understand how climate change is affecting community health and traditional food and medicine systems. As colonial systems and climate impacts intensify health risks and threaten culturally vital foods and medicines, the project will work alongside communities to document these changes and identify priorities for action. By centering Indigenous knowledge and land-based practices, the research aims to strengthen traditional food and medicine systems and support community-led approaches to climate adaptation, resilience, and well-being.

Organization:
Capilano University Foundation

Partner:
African Centre for Early Childhood Education Village

This project examines how anti-Black racism in Vancouver's education system contributes to disproportionate and harmful child welfare involvement for Black families with children ages 0–12. Building on early conversations with impacted families and community groups—including the African Descent Society of BC and the African Village of Early Childhood Educators—the project will bring participants together to identify shared concerns, priorities, and key partners. These insights will guide the co-design of a full PAR project rooted in Black community leadership and focused on transforming the systems that shape early learning and family well-being.

Organization: University of Victoria

Partner:
Peers Victoria Resources Society

This project explores how drug checking services can be redesigned to be culturally safe, trauma-informed, and Indigenous-led for Indigenous people who use illicit drugs. As the toxic drug supply continues to disproportionately harm Indigenous communities, most existing drug checking programs fail to reflect Indigenous knowledge, priorities, or lived realities. Through workshops, dialogues, and planning sessions, the project will identify what is working, what is missing, and how health and drug policy systems must shift. The goal is to reimagine drug checking through Indigenous ways of knowing and to inform more equitable, community-driven policies and supports for Indigenous people who use drugs and their allies.

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Organization:
The University of
British Columbia (UBC)

Partner:
Diversecity Community
Resources Society

This project builds new partnerships between researchers and non-profit health and social service providers in Vancouver, Kelowna, and Terrace to better understand how climate change worsens non-communicable diseases (NCDs) for women facing both precarious migration status and racism. Together, partners will co-develop a research question that examines the root causes of these inequities using an intersectional environmental lens. The project will strengthen cross-sector collaboration and build on earlier community-led findings to inform more equitable health responses for migrant women disproportionately affected by climate-related health risks.

Investigate Grant Recipients

Organization: University
of Victoria

Partner:
Victoria Native Friendship

This project strengthens reconciliation and Indigenous health equity in Greater Victoria by co-creating accountability tools and wellness indicators with urban Indigenous communities and municipal governments. Led by the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, the research brings together First Nations, Métis, and Inuit community members — including those with longstanding territorial ties and those who have relocated — to identify what reconciliation processes, measures, and shared responsibilities are needed at the municipal level. Using community-based participatory methods such as storytelling and community mapping, the project will develop Indigenous-defined indicators of health and wellbeing, along with collaborative accountability mechanisms that municipalities can use to track meaningful progress. By addressing the invisibility of urban Indigenous communities in municipal planning, the lack of measurable commitments, and the need for culturally safe services, this initiative advances the systemic change required to uphold Indigenous rights, self-determination, and long-term community wellness.

Organization:
Simon Fraser University

Partner:
Filipino Canadian
Community & Cultural
Society of British Columbia
(DBA Filipino BC)

This survivor-led research initiative examines the systemic gaps in British Columbia's mental health and psychosocial support systems that were exposed by the 2025 Lapu Lapu Day Festival tragedy. Guided by the experiences and priorities of survivors, family members, witnesses, and affected community members, the project will document how people navigated available supports, identify where mental health and community-based services failed to prevent or respond to escalating distress, and clarify the roles and coordination of government, health, and community actors during disaster response. The research will also explore chronic neighbourhood-level conditions that undermine community safety and resilience, and assess evidence-based interventions that could strengthen B.C.'s mental health and crisis-response systems. By centering lived experience and survivor leadership, this project aims to generate actionable insights that support more compassionate, coordinated, and effective systems of care — both in times of crisis and in the long term.

Organization:
Simon Fraser University

Partner:
Wish Drop-In Centre Society

This project responds to the recent closures of critical support services for sex workers in Vancouver, which have intensified existing health and social inequities — particularly for street-based, Indigenous, racialized, and gender-diverse sex workers. Led collaboratively by WISH Drop-In Centre Society and PACE Society, the research examines how these shifting service landscapes affect sex workers' occupational health and safety (OHS) and explores how sex workers are using mutual aid and community-care strategies to fill emerging gaps. Through participatory action research grounded in lived experience, the project will document sex workers' priorities for building sustainable, community-led models of support, connection, and safety. By centering the expertise of sex workers and highlighting the impacts of criminalization, stigma, and structural exclusion, this initiative aims to inform more stable, equitable, and sex worker-led approaches to OHS, harm reduction, and community wellbeing.

Organization: Ktunaxa Nation Council Society

Partner:
Urban Matters CCC Ltd.

The Ktunaxa Healing Pathways project explores how Ktunaxa-led, culturally grounded healing practices — such as land-based care, cultural harm reduction, ceremony, language, and kinship — can be integrated into health, harm-reduction, and community-wellness systems to reduce drug-related harms across Ktunaxa territory. Rooted in years of direction from Ktunaxa citizens, families, and Elders, the project responds to what community members have consistently shared: that substance use is deeply connected to disconnection from culture, land, family, and spirit. Through participatory research led by those most affected by the toxic drug crisis, the project will identify what supports are working, where systems are failing, and how services must shift to reflect Ktunaxa teachings and the Nation's vision for strong, healthy citizens. By centering belonging, relational healing, and culturally grounded prevention, this initiative aims to strengthen pathways to safety, connection, and long-term wellness for Ktunaxa people and future generations.

Organization:
Providence Health Care Society

Partner:
Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU)

This collaborative project between Providence Health Care and the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users examines how structural and attitudinal barriers within addiction, emergency, and overdose-response services contribute to discrimination, stigma, and burnout — and explores how peer-led, somatic, and consciousness-based strategies can transform these systems from within. Grounded in Listening Circles with People Who Use Drugs (PWUD), systemically racialized service users, and frontline providers, the research responds to shared experiences of harm in care environments shaped by risk management, abstinence-only protocols, racial bias, and institutional cultures that prioritize compliance over relationships. Over three years, service users and providers will co-lead a participatory research and action process to surface truths, build relational safety, and co-create tools that support more equitable, compassionate, and culturally responsive care. By integrating Indigenous worldviews, embodied awareness, and peer leadership (approaches often excluded from medical research) the project aims to foster collective healing and develop pathways toward humane, relationally grounded systems that better support both PWUD and the people who care for them.

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Organization:
Royal Roads
University

Partner: Inspirehealth
Society

This project addresses the unique cancer care and support needs of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) aged 15–39 who live in rural and remote communities across British Columbia — needs that are often overlooked in current cancer care systems. Building on four years of collaboration between Royal Roads University, InspireHealth, BC Cancer, and other partners, the research will engage rural and remote AYAs and the system actors who support them to understand their distinct experiences, priorities, and barriers to care. Using creative, arts-based, and technology-enabled methods, the project will support AYAs to share their stories and co-design practical actions that improve access, equity, and continuity of care. These co-designed solutions will be piloted and evaluated to inform a more responsive, equitable provincial AYA cancer care program. By centering the voices of rural and remote AYAs, the project aims to strengthen patient experiences, reduce inequities, and improve outcomes for young people navigating cancer far from the services they need.

Organization:
Community-Based Research
Centre Society

Partner:
University of Northern British
Columbia

This is How We Heal empowers 2SLGBTQIA+ survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) to co-create arts-based, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded approaches to healing. Building on the findings of two prior community-led projects, the initiative responds to the disproportionate impacts of GBV on 2SLGBTQIA+ people — especially those who are trans, Two-Spirit, Indigenous, disabled, and/or youth — and the systemic barriers they face in accessing support. In three B.C. regions (Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Island, and Northern B.C.), survivor co-researchers will design and lead healing sessions, pilot peer-led support models, and develop resources for service providers. Through art-making, storytelling, and collaboration, the project will generate tools and frameworks that promote cultural safety, queer joy, and responsive care. By centering the voices and leadership of survivors, especially Two-Spirit and Indigenous community members, this work aims to reshape GBV services and contribute to broader healing and justice efforts, including those connected to MMIWG2.

Organization:
Community Living Society

Partner:
The University of British
Columbia (UBC)

We All Need A Home is a disability-led theatre project that challenges stigma and reimagines what inclusive housing can look like for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). In the context of a worsening housing crisis in B.C. and across Canada — where people with IDD are disproportionately denied accessible, affordable, and self-directed housing — self-advocate co-creators from the Community Living Society will use participatory theatre to expose barriers, shift attitudes, and spark dialogue about housing as a fundamental right. Building on two previous productions, this project places self-advocates at the centre of every stage of the work: identifying issues, shaping the narrative, performing, evaluating impact, and mobilizing knowledge. Through storytelling, reflection, and performance, the project will explore the intersections of housing, mental health, and community belonging, while challenging persistent misconceptions that limit people with IDD to institutional or family-dependent living arrangements. By amplifying lived experience and the principle of “nothing about us, without us,” We All Need A Home aims to influence public understanding and inspire more inclusive, community-based housing practices that support people with IDD to live full, self-determined lives.

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Organization:
Centre for Family Equity Society

Partner:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

Out of the Margins examines how poverty and disability intersect to shape the health and well-being of families across British Columbia — particularly households where one or more parents with disabilities rely on provincial disability assistance. Led by the Centre for Family Equity (CFE), a pan-provincial, membership-driven organization rooted in the leadership of parents and caregivers impacted by poverty, the project responds to what members have consistently shared: income, food security, and housing stability are critical determinants of family health, yet families led by parents with disabilities remain largely invisible in policy, services, and public discourse. Building on CFE's Listening Campaign and earlier research on precarity in B.C., this project will work with parents with disabilities, their children, youth, and partners to document the full picture of family well-being, connectedness, and unmet needs. By centering disability justice and lived experience, Out of the Margins will generate evidence and insights to inform health-equity planning and systemic reform — ensuring that whole families, not just individuals, are recognized and supported in efforts to reduce poverty and improve health outcomes across the province.

Organization:
Carrier Sekani Family Services (A Branch Society of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council)

Partner:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

This project aims to strengthen culturally safe, coordinated perinatal care for First Nation pregnant individuals and birthing parents in rural and remote Northern B.C. In partnership with Dakelh communities and Carrier Sekani Family Services, the research explores how social, systemic, and cultural factors shape perinatal experiences, and how improved communication and care coordination can support better outcomes. By working directly with community members, Elders, and local providers, the project will co-develop and pilot solutions that reflect Indigenous knowledge and address barriers such as fragmented services, long travel distances, stigma, and fear of child apprehension. The findings will help guide more compassionate, connected, and equitable perinatal care for families across Northern B.C.

Organization:
The University of British Columbia (UBC)

Partner:
Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU)

In partnership with the Eastside Illicit Drinkers Group for Education (EDGE), this project examines how the criminalization of public drinking intensifies climate-related health risks for illicit drinkers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) during extreme heat and rainfall. Through community-led methods such as mapping, walking interviews, and Photovoice, the research explores how policing, displacement, and restrictive public-space policies heighten exposure to heat, cold, and unsafe conditions — while also documenting the mutual aid, care networks, and place-making practices drinkers use to survive and support one another.

By centering criminalized drinkers as co-researchers and knowledge holders, the project highlights how structural forces — such as racism, poverty, housing precarity, and exclusion from climate planning — produce disproportionate climate and health harms. At the same time, it surfaces community-defined strategies for safety, cooling, shelter, and collective care. The findings aim to inform non-carceral, community-led approaches to climate adaptation and harm reduction that better protect and support residents of the DTES.

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