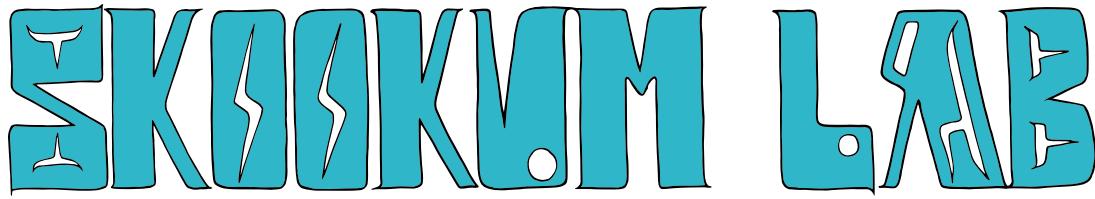


SKOOKUM LAB

An Evaluation of The Indigenous Partnership Pilot Program: A Case Study of Government Barriers to Safe & Effective Social Service Provision

SUBMITTED JANUARY 18, 2021

**A Partnership with the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee/
Skookum Lab and the Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction**



Strong. Powerful. Brave.

Skookum means strong, powerful, and brave. With the support of strong leadership, powerful methodologies, and a brave community, Skookum Lab is developing new ways to address Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey, BC.

Convened by the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee (SUILC), Skookum Lab puts Indigenous wisdom at the centre of its activities. Skookum uses a social innovation approach to tackle this complex issue in BC's largest urban Indigenous community. It's a methodology Indigenous Peoples have used since time immemorial. This report shows that it's working.

Located on the territory of the Semiahmoo, Kwantlen, Katzie, Kwikwitlem, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen First Nations, Skookum Lab is proud to be one of very few Indigenous social innovation initiatives on Turtle Island (North America).

Skookum Lab is made possible through the generosity of our funders:



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Our Goal

Making Surrey a great place for Indigenous children and youth

To meet our goal, we commit to:

Listen to how Indigenous children and youth in Surrey experience poverty.

Understand the complexities of systemic barriers that affect our community.

Cultivate collective wisdom and knowledge to address these barriers.

Initiate prototypes that reduce the number of Indigenous children and youth that experience poverty in Surrey.

Build the capacity of community members and organizations to make and advocate for changes for the benefit of our community.



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Executive Summary

Surrey is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in the province of BC. According to data and research generated by [The Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee](#), 1 in 4 Indigenous children and youth live in poverty in Surrey. Also, according to a [SUILC-Skookum Lab Housing Report](#), Indigenous households are more likely to be in core housing need; 88% of Indigenous households are renters and disproportionately experience housing “vulnerabilities”.

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) has participated in the SUILC’s social innovation lab, called [Skookum Lab](#). The Lab aims to address the issue of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey. Through the Lab, the MSDPR, along with other key stakeholders, has heard from many Indigenous Elders, caregivers, and youth who are living in situations of poverty in Surrey. They have highlighted that “poverty” is an experience of living in nonstop “survival mode”. Skookum Lab participants shared that living in an intergenerational cycle of poverty is a constant struggle to survive and face systemic barriers to accessing support.

Notably, Indigenous people, with lived experiences of poverty, described many obstacles in regards to accessing safe and effective government social services. The MSDPR also listened to Indigenous support workers explain how government social service-related barriers are a key factor that contributes to the issue of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey. As a result, the MSDPR took urgent action, in partnership with the Indigenous community and Indigenous organizations in Surrey, and created the *Indigenous Partnership Pilot Program (IPPP)*.

The IPPP provides support for all income assistance Indigenous “clients” within the [Fraser Regional Friendship Centre](#) (FRAFCA) and [Kekinow Native Housing Society](#) (KNHS). The pilot program aims to reduce the Indigenous poverty/homelessness rate in Surrey by removing barriers to accessing

services. The IPPP coordinator, an Indigenous professional from the Surrey community, works directly out of FRAFCA and KNHS locations to connect with Indigenous clients in addition to collaborating with other partners. The mutual partnership between Indigenous organizations, FRAFCA and KNHS, and the MSDPR has been crucial in the success of the IPPP.

After a year of implementing this pilot (fall of 2019 – fall of 2020), the MSDPR partnered with SUILC’s Skookum Lab to evaluate significant change stories and outcomes as well as the pilot’s performance. Skookum Lab Evaluators carried out: 2 focus group sessions (see *Focus Group Questions for the IPPP Team*) and interviews with 7 IPPP participants (see *Interview Questions for Program Participants*).

The outcome of this evaluation is “*A Case Study of Government Barriers to Safe & Effective Social Service Provision and the Significant Changes of The Indigenous Partnership Pilot Program*”. This case study is a result of the MSDPR: (1) listening to Indigenous people with lived experiences and frontline Indigenous support workers, (2) taking strategic action based on what Indigenous people identified as government social service barriers, and (3) documenting significant changes and outcomes of the IPPP.

The case study of the IPPP demonstrates a hopeful story of what it means to work in partnership (1) with the Indigenous community in Surrey (BC’s largest urban Indigenous population) and (2) with the intention to decolonize government services. The following is a summary of a total of **10 significant changes** that reduced or alleviated government social service-related barriers to safe and effective service provision. Lastly, Evaluators have captured **4 key recommendations**.

Many IPPP participants discussed that income assistance helped offset basic needs and costs of living; however, they felt that benefits and supports were insufficient as it did not help lift them out of an intergenerational cycle of poverty. The IPPP

Team corroborated these narratives and shared that they themselves often felt unable to fully meet the urgent needs of the Indigenous community such as to effectively ensure sustainable financial/housing security.

That said, IPPP participants confidently described that they were experiencing some level of ***“Financial Security & Having Basic Needs Met” (1)*** as a result of being linked to an IPPP worker. Some shared that part of their rent and food costs were paid. They felt a new found sense of self esteem by being able to take care of some of their basic needs. Other participants described encountering housing at a KNHS Complex in Surrey and having a home allowed them to feel more grounded because they now had a roof over their head. After being accommodated at a KNHS complex, a participant was more connected to Indigenous family and kin. A significant change was that they had a new ***“Family Connection & Access to Housing” (2)*** and were ***“Connecting to Culture and Community” (3)***. Without being connected to the IPPP Team, participants shared that they would not have accessed housing, financial benefits, been connected to community and family, nor accessed government social service supports.

Typically, IPPP participants stated that they do not feel safe to access government social services. Before participating in the IPPP, all participants felt a strong sense of fear of judgement; they described in-person and on-the-phone experiences of poor treatment at local service offices. Many participants had decided to avoid going to an income assistance office after these negative experiences. They shared that they would prefer to not access services at all. A significant change was that, through the IPPP, they no longer had to go into a government office but could still access government social services. IPPP participants and the IPPP Team revealed that ***“Meeting at the Friendship Centre or a KNHS Complex as opposed to an income assistance office” (4)*** allowed for safer and more efficient service provision for the Indigenous community in Surrey.

Another significant change for IPPP participants was that the IPPP worker built “a relationship” with them. Previously, participants felt that government assessment processes did not engender positive relational experiences. IPPP participants highlighted that ***“Building a safe, trusted, and supportive relationship with an IPPP worker” (5.0)*** and ***“Meeting face-to-face with an IPPP worker” (5.1)*** were key changes in their relational experiences with a government worker. IPPP participants felt that they were more connected to resources and supports because they had a government worker who understood what it was like to be Indigenous and had substantial experience working with fellow Indigenous people who experience poverty and “survival mode”.

IPPP Acknowledgement of Partnership

**Thank you to the Fraser Regional
Aboriginal Friendship Centre and
Kekino Native Housing Society
for their steadfast support and
contributions as mutual partners in
this work.**

IPPP participants described many situations where government workers asked a lot of questions and subsequently, were told that they were ineligible for services. They also shared that they had to wait long hours to talk to a worker or frequently had to return to an income assistance office. A significant change was that ***“An IPPP worker asks in-depth questions and hears your full story to determine eligibility for services and supports” (6)***. They felt reassured that the IPPP worker knew their full life story and their individual and family challenges

that come with living in poverty and survival mode. They trusted their IPPP worker to meet their critical needs and help them navigate through tough times because the IPPP worker knew their full story, their families, and who they were.

Many participants shared that they did not see visible representation of Indigenous professionals and staff at government offices and programs. A lack of representation of Indigenous peoples, coupled with experiences of poor treatment, meant that many Indigenous peoples would rather “struggle in silence”. The latter description reveals a serious barrier for Indigenous people to access services. Yet, IPPP participants no longer felt unsafe or feared judgement as a result of this pilot. They described a new found sense of safety, dependability, and non-judgement in their experiences with the IPPP worker who is an Indigenous-Surrey resident and professional. **“Being supported by an Indigenous person who is a government worker” (7)** meant that Indigenous families and individuals felt able to engage in income assistance applications and other benefits and services.

Additionally, the IPPP Team shared how MSDPR’s **“Partnership with Local Indigenous Organizations in Surrey” (8)** was a significant change. The IPPP worker’s office was located at FRAFCA and they made frequent on-site visits to KNHS Complexes which allowed for greater efficiency in terms of responding to crisis situations and overall service provision. The IPPP was described as a “one stop shop” in order to provide wraparound supports through a multi-organization program structure and embedding service provision where the Indigenous community works and lives.

Operationally, the IPPP Team felt that they were able to work more closely as a team. This meant that they were more efficient in regards to ensuring less time was wasted in making referrals between organizations. IPPP participants corroborated the IPPP Teams perception of efficiency; participants said that their “needs get met quicker” and it was

“easier” to access support. They could directly send text messages, emails, or call their IPPP worker. A significant change in terms of accessing government services was that **“An IPPP worker provides a rapid response to crisis and emergency situations” (9)**.

Lastly, the success of the IPPP is not only revealed in these latter significant changes. The IPPP Team noted that the Indigenous community has become more aware of the safe and efficient provision of government related social services through this pilot program. And, word has spread throughout the region. The IPPP Team highlighted that the **“Regional Reach of the IPPP” (10)** expanded beyond Surrey. In the past year, the IPPP worker has been supporting Indigenous residents in Surrey, as well as across Langley, Maple Ridge and, even in some cases, on Vancouver Island.

Given this success, it is highly recommended to: **“Increase staffing of the IPPP” (1)** and **“Replicate the IPPP across Metro Vancouver cities and the region” (2)**.

Another key recommendation in regards to narratives revealed from Indigenous peoples who experience barriers to access to government social services is: **“Address Racism and Bias towards Indigenous peoples within government social services” (3)**. This recommendation is aligned with the [Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls to Action](#), namely #57, and direct “calls to action” from IPPP participants accounts of poor treatment at government offices and over the phone¹.

To conclude, the Surrey-Indigenous population is growing and already is the largest urban Indigenous population in BC. Given Indigenous population growth in Surrey, it is highly recommended that the MSDPR works to “Advocate for Increased Subsidized Housing and Support Services in Surrey” (4) to meet the needs of this priority population in the province.

¹ “We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

Introduction to the Indigenous Pilot Partnership Program

The Genesis of the Indigenous Pilot Partnership Program

1 in 4 Indigenous children and youth live in poverty in Surrey. [The Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee](#), a coalition of organizations in Surrey, created “Skookum Lab” to address the issue of urban Indigenous child and youth poverty. [Skookum Lab](#) is one of Canada’s first ever Indigenous social innovation labs.

In the fall of 2018, Skookum Lab carried out a community-wide engagement and research process to address the urgent issue of Indigenous child and youth poverty. In this process, thousands of responses were gathered and summarized in [Skookum Lab’s Community Engagement Findings](#). Many systemic causes of urban Indigenous poverty were identified; significantly, Indigenous community members and social service workers noted the many factors that perpetuate the issue of urban Indigenous poverty as opposed to factors that work to eradicate this issue (page 6-7).

Key informants highlighted the issue that many Indigenous families do not have their basic needs met such as: mental health supports, social housing and rental options, affordable health care, amongst many others. In discussions of unmet needs was an underlying issue; there were social service-related barriers for Indigenous families and children to access much needed services and supports. For example, common barriers included:

- Difficulties for caregivers to fill out applications to receive benefits and services;
- Challenges accessing services online or over the phone;
- Intake processes that have a reputation of being “triggering” or traumatizing for Indigenous families;

- Long wait times or “clean time” to access addictions services;
- A lack of culturally relevant services and programs which are often underfunded and not sustained over long periods of time; and
- Services that do not meet people where they live so accessing services in government spaces is challenging in terms of commuting to many appointments.

One of the most salient themes in discussions of Indigenous families’ experiences of social service provision was captured by Skookum Lab:

“Indigenous people also have to face negative attitudes among service providers and staff that they interact with.”

Skookum Lab participants shared that they fear that service providers hold bias, lack cultural competency, and do not have a trauma-informed approach to “safely” attend to Indigenous clients. For example, Indigenous families may have had adverse childhood experiences and are hesitant to “ask for help”. Also, many key informants noted that Indigenous families experience everyday forms of racism at both interpersonal and institutional levels. This includes systemic racism within healthcare, school, and government systems.

In the Spring of 2019, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) attended a Skookum Lab event. Along with city-wide actors from Ministries and non-governmental organizations, the MSDPR heard first hand, from Indigenous community members, about lived experiences of poverty in Surrey which were documented in Skookum Lab’s Community Engagement Findings. Along with many key actors, the MSDPR heard Indigenous Elders, caregivers, youth, and Indigenous support workers explain how government

social service-related barriers are a key factor that contributes to the issue of Indigenous child and youth poverty in Surrey; consequently, the MSDPR took urgent action and created the Indigenous Partnership Pilot Program (IPPP).

The IPPP was created in mutual partnership with the [Fraser Regional Aboriginal Friendship Centre](#) and [Kekinoow Native Housing Society](#). The significant changes and outcomes of the IPPP are a result of this crucial partnership.

Description of the Program

The IPPP works to support all people who identify as Indigenous and live in Surrey. The focus is on reducing the Indigenous poverty/homelessness rate in the Surrey community by removing barriers to accessing services. The IPPP is connected to various Indigenous agencies throughout the community and works in partnership to deliver services with respect, dignity, and trust for mutual clients.

The IPPP provides support for all income assistance clients within the Fraser Regional Friendship Centre (FRAFCA) and Kekinoow Native Housing Society (KNHS). The IPPP coordinator, an Indigenous professional from the Surrey community, works directly out of FRAFCA and KNHS locations to connect with clients in addition to collaborating with other Indigenous Community Outreach Workers, MCFD Social Workers/Roots Workers and Fraser Health.

The pilot program works with FRAFCA Community Services Homeless Prevention Program to:

- Provide housing subsidies to Indigenous pilot program participants;
- Supporting clients to submit applications for BC Housing, rental programs and to access various shelter resources within the community;
- Connects interested and eligible clients into Indigenous housing resources throughout the community; and
- Connecting clients to Mental Health & addiction services.

The program expands access to education and training to: connect clients with WorkBC Employment Services and support eligible Income Assistance clients with the Self Employment Program and transitional ministry services. In the first year of sustainable employment, the IPPP works directly with clients to set goals for education and employment. The IPPP connects clients with various other education, training, and employment programs in the community.

Additionally, the IPPP works to “improve affordability”. For example, the IPPP connects clients with various housing subsidies, refers clients to QUEST food exchange, and increases participation in the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Coupon Program to provide access to healthy, local, sustainable food and food producers, as well as connects clients with affordable childcare options, subsidies, and funding.

Evaluation Methodology

The SUILC's Skookum Lab and the MSDPR partnered to carry out an evaluation after a year (2019-2020) of implementation of the IPPP. The objectives of this evaluative study were:

- To communicate significant change stories, systems change impacts, and the value of social innovation; and
- Learn about prototype performance, processes, and how to scale and sustain them.

A Skookum Lab Evaluator, along with a Skookum Lab Community Leader, carried out interviews with the assistance of the IPPP Team. Three FRAFCA staff members and one KNHS staff member participated in a total of two focus group sessions (see Focus Group Question for the IPPP Team). Also, seven IPPP participants shared their stories and feedback in key informant interviews (see Interview Questions for Program Participants).

Evaluation Research Results



IPPP Participant Experiences of Poverty

“Survival Mode”

IPPP participants described a host of persistent or periodic experiences of poverty and “survival mode.” Many Indigenous single mothers shared how stressful it is to be a sole caregiver of multiple children while living on a single income. Many shared that they felt that income assistance does not cover pressing household needs. Others shared the challenges that come with being homeless, disconnected from their Indigenous families and kin, and displaced from their land-based nations.

All IPPP participants highlighted the frequent struggle to find secure, affordable, and safe housing in Surrey. Many attributed their lack of access to appropriate and safe housing to being priced out of “good housing.” Directly related to housing affordability is the reality that many participants are often and permanently unable to work. A single mother expressed her struggle as the sole caregiver in her family:

“I can’t go find a job. I have to take care of my kids. You know? As much as I want to get a job...”

The worry and stress that comes with not being able to work for diverse reasons and being the sole caregiver to many children was discussed in conversations about participants’ experiences of “trying to survive off of a basic income” and experiences of homelessness and precarious housing.

Additional barriers to employment result from societal discrimination and stigma faced, in particular by Indigenous, two-spirited persons living on a small income. A participant who identified as two-spirit said:

“That’s like huge, I face a lot of obstacles in the workforce. People aren’t taking me seriously. First of all, for many reasons, they just take me for face value. So, job opportunities are barely there. And every time I would go, like, they’re obviously gonna choose the guy that’s more masculine looking and smart looking over me, even though I’m probably more qualified for the job. So, I was just very low and I needed help.”

Even when employment is secured, mental illness can be a major barrier to holding a job, as one individual shared:

“I’m definitely like, on my feet, again, a bit. [...] And, I’m trying to get resumes printed up and trying to find a part time job or something just to get myself motivated again so that I’m back on my feet but this is hard. I got a good job. And then it’s like, my mental illness kind of kicks in, and then I struggle. It’s always a fight. So, it’s like, I get security and then I don’t.”

IPPP participants describe their experiences of poverty as “always a fight”, “a struggle”, and an endless effort to survive “with a lot of obstacles”. Importantly, they named many obstacles in regards to government social service-related barriers to safe and effective service provision. At the same time, they recounted their motivations, deepest desires, and many painstaking efforts to try and encounter opportunities and strategies to lift them out of a number of challenging situations, such as precarious housing and homelessness, unemployment, and intergenerational financial insecurity.

Government Social Service-Related Barriers to Safe & Effective Service Provision

This section summarizes 5 key challenges pertaining to IPPP participants experiences of “Government Social Service-Related Barriers to Safe & Effective Service Provision”. These five themes emerged from interview conversations about service, or “systems-based”, barriers that IPPP participants experienced before they were accessing the IPPP. In the subsequent section, “Significant Changes of Government Social Service Provision”, many of the IPPP participants’ narratives about government social service provision have changed. Many barriers were removed or alleviated as a result of the IPPP.

This evaluation is a hopeful case study of how systems change for safe and effective government social service provision is possible. Lastly, it must be acknowledged that this changemaking process began by actively listening to Indigenous peoples with lived experiences who are “experts” in how to create safer and more effective government social service. They said that the following key challenges were barriers for them to be able to feel safe and experience effective government social service provision:

1. Insufficient Income Assistance;
2. Fear of Judgement & “Struggling in Silence”;
3. Lack of Visible Representation of Indigenous Peoples at Income Assistance Offices;
4. Ability to Understand a Client’s Full Story; and
5. Experiences of Being Turned Away and Deemed “Ineligible” After Assessment.

Insufficient Income Assistance

When describing how IPPP participants are trying to lift out of an intergenerational cycle of poverty, they said their biggest challenge was a lack of ability to provide for themselves and their families. In the words of one man who was struggling with homelessness, he said: “I’m just trying to get my feet on the ground.”

Many IPPP participants interviewed were single parents and caregivers to children. They attested to the inadequacy of income assistance to get themselves out of “survival mode” and poverty. One participant said: “It’s unrealistic the payment that you’re given as a single parent,” while another stated:

“You get some tax benefit and you have to be able to survive off that. And, a lot of things can come about on a month-to-month basis. Someone can get hurt, someone can lose their shoe at school, or anything can come up as a single parent.”

Interviewees shared the sentiment that income assistance “was barely enough to make ends meet”.

Income assistance was also described as insufficient to address housing insecurity. One participant described that, while on income assistance, only subsidized housing was affordable:

“I live in subsidized housing. So that’s a saving grace in itself. If I wasn’t living in a subsidized unit, [...] I don’t know where I would be. I’d be homeless or in a shelter because I know for a fact that the money you’re given, not living in subsidized housing, renders you sort of living like a gypsy. It’s completely not attainable or affordable to live in anything else but subsidized housing when you’re on income assistance.”

In the words of another participant, income assistance helped them “be able to eat,”; yet, they struggled to see how it could enable them to go beyond just “surviving”. A common sentiment was that income assistance can be seen as a social service-related barrier to lift Indigenous peoples out of poverty. Participants shared that it functions to offset basic costs of living but doesn’t function to fully cover needs such as secure and safe permanent housing.

The view that participants are accessing all-inclusive government resources was negated by the IPPP Team,

who described “limited government resources” to meet basic needs of people living in poverty. The Team shared that they themselves often felt “helpless” or had their “hands tied” as social service providers because lack of resources precluded their capacity to effectively ensure, for example, sustainable financial/housing security. The Team also observed that many Indigenous people would simply prefer to go without services as opposed to try and access these supports.

Fear of Judgement & “Struggling in Silence”

A second key theme that arose from IPPP participant accounts of barriers related to their in-person and on-the-phone experiences with staff at local service offices. One of the most pervasive and frequent barriers to accessing safe, supportive, and effective assistance is a fear of judgement and a lack of a sense of safety. Consequently, a lack of a sense of safety at income assistance offices was a barrier for participants to engage with government services. Many participants shared that they would prefer to simply not access services at all. One participant shared their experience:

“Well, you know, like I said, the biggest thing is, you get judged as an Aboriginal as soon as they see you. I’m a very casual dresser. This is me. They see my tattoos. They may see me and my children and my child who has a disability and right away, I’m just judged across the board.”

This sentiment is echoed across IPPP participants’ accounts of attempts to seek assistance. Participants identified how they felt when dealing with workers who had treated them poorly. They felt perceived as “dirty”, “drunk”, “on drugs”, and judged because they frequently needed assistance from government benefits and supports. The following account also begs the question to what extent such stigma is reserved for Indigenous persons, as this participant noted a difference in treatment when accessing services after having received their status card:

“I just recently got my status too. But people don’t really treat me like an Aboriginal but as soon as they found out, it was like, they think I’m seeking money for drugs or alcohol or something like that, versus support for like food and housing. [...] It makes it really difficult when those things happen. And, you really feel like crap because of it. Like you are almost diminished for who you are?”

All participants expressed the feeling of being judged as an Indigenous person who is seeking income assistance. In one way, “fear of judgement” and a lack of sense of safety is a social service-related barrier. Many people are not accessing services and assistance because they expect to be judged by staff.

Many interviewees expressed that there is a common misconception about Indigenous peoples who live in situations of poverty. They shared that it is a myth that Indigenous peoples are frequently accessing government resources and taking advantage of the social assistance system. The IPPP Team shared a nuanced understanding of this misconception.

Being on the frontline of social assistance services for Indigenous peoples, IPPP workers attest that their clients prefer to “go without” services and benefits for fear of judgement by social service workers. Clients were described as feeling ashamed of “being in need” and many feel “undeserving of benefits” and supports. IPPP workers explained that many of their Indigenous clients, who need benefits and supports, will often prefer to avoid government offices and social services. Fear of judgement, lack of safety, and sense of lack of merit were key reasons why clients do not access much needed benefits and services. For this reason, Skookum Lab Evaluators heard from a support worker that “people are struggling in silence”.

All interviewees (i.e., IPPP participants and the IPPP Team) advocated that many Indigenous people in Surrey are in need of wraparound supports to be able to exit an intergenerational cycle of poverty and challenging life situations. All participants lamented that Indigenous peoples’ experiences of poverty are heavily exacerbated by social service-related barriers that prevent them from lifting out of “survival mode” and into a “security and safety mode.”

Lack of Visible Representation of Indigenous Peoples at Income Assistance Offices

In conversations, participants frequently shared the observation that *“there's a lot of non-Aboriginal people in the social assistance office.”* Indigenous peoples' fear of going to an income assistance office also stems from a lack of Indigenous representation in professional roles which meant that they did not feel fully safe or welcome in local service offices. For the latter reason, a lack of representation of Indigenous staff at local offices is a major barrier to safe social-service provision.

It was identified that, if non-Indigenous staff became more aware of past and present historical legacies of colonialism and practiced trauma-informed service provision, Indigenous clients would potentially feel more able to access services and programs. That said, having Indigenous identified professionals embedded at local offices was seen as a key way to begin to breakdown barriers to services and programs.

Ability to Understand a Client's Full Story

Indigenous participants described the experience of when workers read a case file and assess for eligibility. They lacked confidence that a fair eligibility assessment could be made upon the limited and potentially anecdotal information documented in a case file. One IPPP participant expressed:

“You phone in and then they're like, “Wait, let me read.” And you know they are going to take five minutes to read one paragraph. And you are like “How are you gonna know anything about me?”

There are also concerns with simply being misunderstood. As another participant disclosed:

“I know workers were being informed that yes, I do have anger issues. Yes, I do get very frustrated but I always inform everyone that it's not me and it's not them. It's the system and

how I had to wait for assistance that I needed right then and there. And while one might have wait for a phone call up to three hours later in the ministry office, and then you're explaining to them and you know, you have to keep explaining yourself all the time.”

IPPP participants expressed emotions of disappointment, fear, anger, and frustration because they were unsure how small pieces of information were being documented to assess their eligibility for assistance. They also felt frustrated by having to repeat their emotionally charged life stories and challenges to many staff.

Participants wished to: (1) feel safe enough to disclose their whole story and (2) that there was a process for fully understanding where people are coming from. IPPP participants expressed that they wished that they could feel reassured that a staff member would be understanding of their life struggles, be trauma-informed, and work with them to find a solution and an effective response to alleviate or fully address their challenges with social service supports.

Experiences of Being Turned Away and Deemed “Ineligible” After Assessment

In other ways, IPPP participants expressed that they are fearful of trying to explain their stories and make efforts to access supports because they were tired of being turned away and deemed “ineligible” for much needed supports. One participant expressed the latter in the following way:

“You know, having to just talk to them, because even over the phone, (they say) ‘we know you're just not eligible for this or eligible for that’. They don't even give you a ‘Why’ so you don't want to deal with them in anyway because it's not going to come out positive. So, you just don't. [...] You don't want to when you're already struggling. And you're already you know, feeling like you are judged by all that stuff as an Aboriginal so you don't want to go out there and feel more belittled. Well, for me anyways.”

Being ineligible for much needed supports and services was a key theme in which participants had felt deeply disheartened by. Many participants discussed scenarios of hypervigilance and tones of judgement when being assessed by staff. A participant said:

"They're just gonna be like, 'well, what did you do with that [social assistance cheque]?' 'And what did you spend this on?' 'And, you should know that you get your child tax benefit for that.' 'You got it (social assistance cheque) last month.'"

Participants were acutely aware and fearful of being questioned. Many described experiences of being scared of saying the wrong thing, being uncertain of what to say in the first place, or unsure what staff were looking for them to say to either determine their ineligibility or eligibility. One participant stated:

"I find calling in or going into an office was really stressful. And I had a lot of times [that] caused me more stress, just because of not being aware of my rights, and actually how to navigate through the system."

Another participant stated that they felt little was resolved in their situation. Another participant said that they "have to verify your life. It's not enough to really be in dire need". For many, either urgent needs were not resolved or there was a significant wait requirement. An IPPP participant who was living on the streets and without a cellphone stated:

"The last time I went, I got to kind of run around to the point where I was frustrated too. I went a few more months without any assistance or anything. It was just a lot harder to get those things where you don't have like a cellphone or, you know, different things available. And it just made it more frustrating than anything to even bother with it [...]"

Participants recounted reactions, questions, and conversations with staff during eligibility assessments from which they felt like their emergency situations were not resolved. Interviewees acknowledged that Indigenous peoples are fighting to lift themselves out of cycles of poverty but they cannot do this alone.

The IPPP is a documented case study in which participants feel supported by government social services and in which IPPP participants felt that the government has understood these latter barriers to access and made significant changes. Also, it was recognized that the IPPP was created in mutual partnership with the Indigenous community and Indigenous organizations in Surrey.

Significant Changes in Government Social Service Provision

In the last section, IPPP participants have highlighted their concerns and identified gaps in government service provision. They shared their experiences with the hope that MSDPR will further consider how to make meaningful change to decolonize government social services; and, namely, in terms of the provision of safe and effective government service provision for and with Indigenous people.

The IPPP was evaluated to share the evidence-based findings of how this pilot responded to the urgent call for improvement of government social service provision. All interview participants uplifted the IPPP as a case study of best practice in regard to Indigenizing and decolonizing government service provision; specifically, reducing barriers to access social services and promoting a feeling of participant safety.

Firstly, in focus group sessions, the IPPP Team shared their alternative operational approach to service provision. For example, instead of services as siloed within different organizations; the IPPP was seen as “a one stop shop” or, in other words, a wrap-around support model to streamline services for Indigenous peoples and families. The IPPP worker was housed at FRAFCA and closely tied to Kekinow Native Housing Society (KNHS) which made service provision immersed in the culture of local Indigenous organizations and with an intention of mutual partnership and relationship.

Secondly, IPPP participants acknowledged that the IPPP reduced barriers to safe and effective service provision in the following three key ways; the pilot was: (1) embedded in Indigenous organizations, (2) implemented by Indigenous support workers and professionals, and the IPPP (3) applied a culturally safe, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive wraparound support model. Through the IPPP, many participants described a positive, and thus contradictory, experience compared to previous experiences.

IPPP Team members commented that participants did not have to go the “normal route” to income assistance offices and make multiple and frequent phone calls to access government services. IPPP participants were supported by an IPPP worker and a wraparound support team which resulted in significant changes for participants.

An IPPP worker asks in-depth questions and hears your full story to determine eligibility for services and supports

First, having a in-person conversation, rather than filling out a form, removed fear in the social assistance application process. Participants shared accounts of government workers asking a lot of questions and then being told that they were ineligible for services, or having to wait long hours to talk to a worker. Participants felt that they were not provided with efficient and sufficient access to all benefits, supports, and information available to meet their critical needs. A participant described the compassion and the ability of the IPPP worker to listen, in-person, to people’s stories and help participants navigate tough times. One participant expressed this in the following:

“When I told her like my story, and what my struggles were like, after it was over, she just looked at me and she’s like, “Oh, my God, I cannot believe you have to go through that.” Like, how could my family have disowned me obviously. She said “No, no, no, I’m gonna help you.” [...] She gave me like a step-by-step plan. She’s been there ever since.”

With the new IPPP worker housed at FRAFCA, participants shared how their experiences of social assistance had drastically changed as a result. They felt that they were questioned in ways that would

determine eligibility of supports and services. The following was a statement made by a participant:

"Just knowing that you have access to, are eligible for some other things that you didn't think that you were before."

Participants felt that the majority of their experiences were of government workers being hypervigilant of the questions that participants asked and words that they used to describe their needs and challenges. However, participants negative experiences of assessment changed as they became aware that, in fact, they were eligible for benefits and services or they became aware of possible access to diverse resources in their community.

That said, if they became aware that they were ineligible of benefits, they had positive experiences of the IPPP worker going the extra mile to try and meet their needs in alternative ways and described a sense of "comfort" and "feeling good" about their experiences of working through criteria and information to assess eligibility. One participant described the latter:

"Yeah, to feel that comfort level, you know, so you don't have to worry about it ... even if you (IPPP worker) were to say "no, you don't qualify for this" but say "oh, maybe I can do something else for you". So, it makes you feel good, you know, to ask, just that they even ask and know what you're qualified for and that's good to know."

The feeling that the IPPP worker was making all efforts to ensure that participants were not "falling through the cracks" was observed by participants and the IPPP Team. This is demonstrated in participant narratives, for example, one participant said:

"She likes to ask questions cause you don't know what you're eligible for, what your criteria is, or you get your same paycheck every month, but maybe there's a little bit more too that you didn't know, or something's not right about it. And also, you can totally ask, you don't have to wait."

Another key theme within accounts of the IPPP worker was their efforts to ask questions with compassion and to support and advocate while knowing participants' full story. One IPPP participant said:

"She is advocating for me, as a stand-in to be able to really get the resources that are there for me, in terms of being on disability and being on basic welfare."

Now, many felt that the IPPP worker was a "game changer" in the government social service system. They were accessing benefits, supports, and resources or, if they weren't eligible, they felt that the IPPP worker went above and beyond to in some way meet their needs.

The IPPP worker took time to listen to participants' requests and questions and work with them as a team to resolve crisis situations and to meet needs. One participant stated:

"As soon as I met her (IPPP worker), she just had an iPad. That's when I started spitting out all the questions as to what I'm eligible for, or if I'm eligible for it, and she like, looked it up and did her thing and I was eligible for things that I didn't even know that I could ask for."

Before the IPPP worker, participants described feeling scared to ask questions or say the wrong thing. Now, IPPP participants share that they had freedom and comfort to ask questions and to say what they needed to say in moments of crisis and substantial life challenges. To experience unexpected supports, as the result of collaborating with an IPPP worker, was also a positive change described by many.

An IPPP worker provides a rapid response to crisis and emergency situations

Not only did participants describe significant changes in terms of feeling comfortable when a government worker asks them questions; they also described encountering new benefits, supports and resources

available to them. Before the IPPP, they were waiting for a response on a time-sensitive need or were deemed ineligible after government assessment. One person said:

"They say to you, 'Sorry, we can't help you. There's nothing we can do about it.' Right? No, no, there's no resolving of anything. [...] The IPPP worker tries to resolve something, you get it resolved, at least by the end of the day. And she doesn't give up."

These narratives tie into another key account relating to the IPPP worker's rapid response to crisis and meeting needs. Another participant stated:

"So that piece of also just the IPPP worker being efficient and really caring and making effort. You really saw that compared to other support workers."

IPPP participants observed how different it was for them to access supports; they observed the IPPP worker as their advocate and support worker. A concrete example of the IPPP worker's effort to rapidly respond to pressing needs is in the following statement:

"So, she's like, helped me with getting \$100 for a gift certificate while I waited (for social assistance approval), which totally helped me because then I was able to like eat for the next couple days. And it made things a lot better. [...] I was able to go to the grocery store and grab a bunch of food and get some gas and whatever so I could live in my car and have some heat."

The emergency and crisis situations experienced by many participants required a rapid response. One person said:

"You have to verify your life. It's not enough to really be in dire need in order for them to see us over the phone line; rather than the IPPP worker, you kind of give a little bit of your situation. And she's so quick and efficient just to help."

All participants described how quick and efficient the IPPP worker was in responding to needs. Operationally,

the IPPP Team described that they worked closely as a team which also prevented time wasted in making referrals. They felt their respective work had improved in "quality" because they were able to act swiftly as a team and find "help right away". Notably, the IPPP worker had a cellphone and email in which participants, as well as FRAFCA and KNHS support workers, could send a message to when they were in need of supports and did not have to wait because of their close working relationship.

As a result of the IPPP Team's wraparound supports during crisis and emergency situations, participants stated to Skookum Lab Evaluators: "our needs get met quicker", "the worker made it very easy" or "Now, I don't have to worry. She made my life a lot easier".

Meeting at the Friendship Centre or a KNHS Complex as opposed to an income assistance office

FRAFCA and KNHS Complexes were identified as key sites where the IPPP worker would meet participants. Many participants were pleasantly surprised to have a government worker located and embedded at FRAFCA or on-site at KNHS (where they lived). One participant stated:

"Well, the first time when I met her, obviously, she's told me that she just started working. And I said, 'Okay, let's see, let's see how good of a worker you are.' But just knowing that she was there, you know, like, whoa, we have a social ministry worker [...] that's helping through FRAFCA, which I didn't know at first."

Many described what it meant to them to be served and supported at an Indigenous-led and culturally safe space. A participant expressed:

"I guess, because I could go to a native place that I felt like I'm with my own people kind of thing. It was like I belonged, like that aspect that I have people more on my side. Yeah, rooting for me versus going to somewhere, or just gonna have that kind of hypocritical judgment."

Single Indigenous mothers described that not going into the income assistance office was helpful in many ways as well. One mother said:

"It's hard to go to ministry, when you do have two children. I don't want to take them there because you see a lot of addicted people. I'm not trying to judge, but they smoke and they do their thing. And that's not what I want my children to see. Right? So that's one major thing. Second, is being Aboriginal. They judge you or as soon as they see your skin color. So, you're kind of placed on you know, the lower level or whatever it is, you know?"

This participant shared that the income assistance office was not a safe or appropriate space for her to go with her children. Also, she felt judged as an Indigenous person. Another participant shared precisely why meeting at KNHS was helpful, herself being a resident:

"It's been absolutely 100% useful, in that I am a single mother. And, I mean, let's say I didn't have a vehicle. And at one point, I didn't. So that would be hard commuting back and forth, time schedule, on a time crunch with three kids in school, and, you know, just having to take myself down to that place only to be denied for whatever reason. Yeah, no, it's been very useful that I have somebody (the IPPP worker)."

Another participant described falling through the cracks of the system and now the IPPP worker directly goes to KNHS to work with them:

"I didn't know that this service even existed. Since I've had the opportunity for the IPPP worker to work with me, I've not had to go to the office for anything in terms of money [...] And it's more direct, where I haven't been overlooked."

Similarly, a participant described meeting the IPPP worker at their KNHS Complex in Surrey as less stressful than attending an income assistance office or calling in by phone:

[...] It would help me to navigate better in a system that I find calling in, or going into an office, was really stressful. And, I had a lot of times caused me more stress, just because of not being aware of my rights, and actually how to navigate through the system, that this (the IPPP) was a good way to speak to somebody that could help me."

Having a worker at the KNHS Complex and FRAFCA has meant that: participants were not overlooked, less stressed, not wasting time and spending money on transit with children, having an appropriate space to go with their children, and not feeling judged and unsafe at an office or over the phone.

Building a safe, trusted, and supportive relationship with a IPPP worker

An IPPP participant stated *"It's just having that chance to build the relationship."*

Many participants expressed how meaningful it was to sit down with a government worker who gets to know them on a personal level. Another participant shared:

"I just think it's more hands on. Yeah, it feels a little bit more, you know, quality, over sort of protocol. In terms of, you'll feel more supported. More, I guess, on a personal level, which a person in poverty needs all the encouragement that they can get."

Government workers become worthy of participants' trust when they relate to them in ways that engender feelings of safety and reliability. In discussions about the difference between the IPPP and standard income assistance service, one IPPP participant said:

"Oh, my God, it's been it's such a relief because I'm not waiting in two, three-hour, four-hour lines in the cold with the baby in the rain. It has helped me be aware more of what my rights actually are. And to be treated, honestly, to be treated better, as far as just to be rather than a number in their system and be treated like a human being who is going through, you know, certain things that I'm going through right now."

This participant reveals a key narrative throughout discussions; many participants have felt that they have been treated poorly. Many attest that an IPPP worker has made all the difference in their relational experience with government services. For example, a participant shared that they can rely on their IPPP worker and feel “*more safe and secure*” and another said, “*she's always there, like, so packed with information, like I, I'm so used to this. So, she's just been there every step of the way. Very, very dependable. You can depend on her for anything.*”

Many participants shared what it has meant to have a IPPP worker who is willing to get to know them, as well as go the extra mile and respond quickly. Building a safe, trusted, and supportive relationship with a government worker has shifted participants' narratives about their relational experiences of workers and improved their ability to access appropriate and effective social assistance.

Meeting face-to-face with an IPPP worker

In terms of building relationships, some participants really appreciated that they could have in-person meetings with the IPPP worker. They said it was easier to provide information, to get information, and to explain their whole story. One participant shared:

“And it was more face to face. And like, she was really supportive in those aspects, like with different things like, she knew I was kind of at a pretty hard place all the time. So, she made it a little more easier for me. And yeah, I personally like the face-to-face meeting. It's better than on the phone, and they can kind of see where you're at. You're (the IPPP worker) not just judging. And, you're just seeking whatever, right? Like, it's made it like a more personable.”

A participant described the IPPP worker taking the time to help them fill out forms when feeling overwhelmed and while being in a tremendously challenging circumstance. They said “*I was able to, like go to her (the IPPP worker) and it was like one on one and she can get proper details of what was going on.*”

Another participant stated similarly:

“She's definitely going to give me all the information. And she was with me like side-by-side telling me exactly how to fill it out how to do it, and because I'm not really good with, like, the procedures and the formalities of it (...) So, she was she's definitely like, given me access to those facilities. But she was there with me helping me and helping me understand what they are, what I was doing.”

In-person meetings proved to contribute to authentically and compassionately develop relationships between the IPPP worker and the IPPP participant. One participant even described that their direct and one-on-one relationship with the IPPP worker was more efficient in terms of “*not having to call a 1-800 number anymore*”. Others described: “*not having to repeat yourself*”, having a worker that “*knows how to help*” because they understand their full story and they're not getting “*frustrated*” because they have to “*explain over and over to different workers or get kicked out of an office [...]*”.

Participants all were relieved that they could be supported by one worker, in-person, who knew who they were and their full story, as well as supporting them in safe and helpful ways. One participant described this fully:

“I think it's been really nice to build a relationship and getting to know her (the IPPP worker) personally, like through this environment, because a regular worker, they wouldn't have taken the time. Like, you know, [...] I have a special needs child and yeah, sometimes they tend to eat all the food. Like, they (government workers) just don't (know). And so, you don't have to keep explaining [...] It's just having that chance to build the relationship. And not be judged. That's the number one thing.”

Many participants described the feeling that they were accepted, seen, heard, and helped in supportive ways from having one assigned worker who they could meet in-person. A key narrative was not only that they could

build a safe and trusting relationships with a worker but that the IPPP worker also identified as Indigenous. This meant everything to participants.

Being supported by an Indigenous person who is a government worker

Participants were directly asked if there was a difference between being supported by a non-Indigenous government worker compared to an Indigenous government worker. A common sentiment was: representation of Indigenous peoples in government social services meant easier access to appropriate benefits and services, as well as a feeling of safety. One participant called it *“the golden ticket”*. All participants in diverse ways described that Indigenous professionals fostered mutual *“understanding”, “building relationships”, “openness to really meet my needs”,* a balancing of power dynamics, and access to culturally appropriate supports. One participant shared:

“Aboriginal people are working with other Aboriginal people, like you feel accepted, you don’t feel judged, you feel that you’re being heard instead of like, you know, the whole, I’m up here and you’re down there kind of thing which is huge now in order to access services.”

The benefits of having representation were echoed throughout accounts of access to services. An IPPP participant described how they felt when they were supported by the IPPP worker:

“For myself, it was huge because I am new in recovery and I’ve been on my wellness journey now for one year and I chose sobriety as a means of how I got sober. An Indigenous person understands that and also the aspects of it culturally, which are huge to me and my daily life. Smudging and sweet grass and prayers and just having the knowledge that they have, and they’re well versed in knowing, as another indigenous person [...]. And I just find it more inspiring that more Aboriginals are

taking a stand in this position to help other people like myself, who have hopes for myself for a better future.”

All participants described how they were able to feel safe, supported, and culturally seen, heard, and understood. In the words of a participant:

“It’s a big deal when it’s an Aboriginal person that you’re able to look straight in the eye and talk to and be acknowledged, kind of at the same time.”

While another recognized that the IPPP worker was also from the Surrey-Indigenous community and said, *“I have representation from my people. My community.”*

Also, the IPPP Team acknowledged that having a government worker who is Indigenous and from the Surrey community was invaluable in this work. The IPPP worker was described as approachable, trauma informed, and competent. The IPPP Team believed that the IPPP worker has instilled trust, removes fear and ultimately improves effectiveness of government social assistance.

Throughout accounts of the IPPP worker was the common sentiment that *“representation matters”*. Notably, a benefit of having Indigenous government workers was an increased sense of culturally safe, trauma informed, and effective service provision.

Connecting to Culture and Community

Participants stated that they had become more connected to their culture and community. One participant stated *“The IPPP worker is giving you opportunities to connect to the community”*. Another participant described how they felt able to invite the IPPP worker to their celebration and ceremony. They said *“that was huge for me to have that kind of connection with another Aboriginal person, regardless of their job and what they do.”*

Additionally, a participant who recently got their status card, was connected to the IPPP worker

and simultaneously became more aware of the services and supports at FRAFCA. Connection to culture and community was seen as a significant benefit of the IPPP.

Family Connection & Access to Housing

Participants described finding kin and family by being housed at KNHS in Surrey. One person hopefully stated:

"I'm changing my life. So, I'm way better than I was before. I'm happier now. [...] because I only knew one side of myself and now that I have this whole side of myself through my mother. I'm complete."

This particular participant was now living with her mother and was newly connected to their Indigenous family, as well as the wider Indigenous community, because they were housed at KNHS.

Additionally, the IPPP Team described how they were able to house people and families quicker as a result of working as a team. For families, who had their children in care, encountering stable housing was important in order for them to have their children return home after being in foster care because they could meet Ministry requirements in regards to their housing.

Financial Security & Having Basic Needs Met

With pride and hope, many participants described how they felt more financially secure or had more of their basic needs met as a result of accessing the IPPP. For example, a participant shared: *"at least I can say that, like, my portion of my rent is paid, my food is paid. I can get an outfit. And that's it. My basic needs are met."*

A single mother stated that having her basic needs met also helped her with her self-esteem. She said:

"... go buy some, some more food and snacks for my kid for the week and hold us over until the next key payday. So huge. So, I don't have to wait, look down upon myself, because I'm struggling as a single parent, you know?"

Another single mother stated that the IPPP worker helped her get by, they shared:

"Just knowing that you have an extra hundred dollars for that month is to me a lot because that's our week, right there."

Financial security was strongly associated with housing security. One participant exclaimed: *"I have security and knowing that I have a roof over my head."* Some participants discussed how they became housed at KNHS and the feeling of *"having a home"* was a significant change in their lives.

Regional Reach of the IPPP

The IPPP Team described helping more people, over 400 Indigenous people, as word has gotten out in the community and region. They stated that the IPPP has helped more people get access to disability and social assistance and other community programs such as FRAFCA's Cultural Wellness Services.

The success of the IPPP is demonstrated in the reach of the program. The IPPP worker has served Surrey-Indigenous residents and has made exceptions and served people from Langley to Mapleridge and in some cases on Vancouver Island. Notably, the IPPP is intended to serve Indigenous-Surrey residents. However, word has gotten out and Indigenous residents have sought assistance from all over the region.

Mutual Partnership with Local Indigenous Organizations in Surrey

The IPPP Team felt that government social services are now more closely connected to FRAFCA and KNHS. Staff described a mutually beneficial relationship that has developed and continues to grow between MSDPR and local Indigenous organizations in Surrey.

They felt that their capacity to meet needs of Indigenous families and individuals has increased as a result of this multi-organization program structure. It was said that it was *"easier"* to work as a team. For example, the IPPP Team could work together to mitigate inefficiencies and rapidly respond. One IPPP Team member stated that the IPPP worker located at FRAFCA allowed her to just *"walk down the hall"* and work alongside the IPPP worker. This meant that the IPPP Team could have: (1) quick conversations and (2) make informed decisions based on a comprehensive understanding of individual needs, life stories, and emergencies and, subsequently, respond effectively to crisis situations.

The IPPP Team stated that they work with values rooted in *"compassion"*, *"empathy"*, *"respect"*, and *"non-judgement"*. They also highlighted the sense of urgency in their work to meet fellow Indigenous community members' needs. The Team felt that this partnership ensured that Indigenous people were accessing services with ease. Significantly, FRAFCA and KNHS now report that they were confident referring Indigenous people seeking assistance to a government-IPPP worker knowing they were a *"safe person"* and namely, a fellow Indigenous person.

Recommendations

At first, having a close partnership between MSDPR, FRAFCA, and KNHS was described by the IPPP Team as an experiment in decolonizing government social services. Some were cautious and skeptical given previous participant experiences of government workers and the legacy of colonial forms and functions of government social service provision. However, all IPPP Team members expressed that, now, given their positive experiences, they feel that the IPPP should be sustained and expanded. The following are four key recommendations:

1

Increase staffing of the IPPP

When asked if the IPPP program should be sustained and scaled, the IPPP Team unanimously advocated for the IPPP to be sustained. They highly recommended that the IPPP worker continue to be a part of a wraparound support model implemented by MSDPR and the two local Indigenous organizations in Surrey.

Most importantly, they recommended that the IPPP program should be scaled in terms of creating more IPPP positions to assist the IPPP worker/program lead which is already in place. They advocated to continue to increase their Team's capacity as they are seeing significant changes after only one year of piloting the program. The IPPP Team discussed that they are still functioning with gaps in staffing and services in order to meet the needs of BC's largest Indigenous population. Given the high rate of Indigenous population growth in Surrey and a disproportionate gap in social service funding for Indigenous organizations in the city, it was highly recommended to prioritize scaling the IPPP through increased staffing and capacity.

2

Replicate the IPPP in other Metro Vancouver cities

The IPPP Team commented on the reach of the IPPP across Metro Vancouver and even to Vancouver Island. They highly recommended replicating the IPPP in other Metro Vancouver cities. They felt that it would be strategic to continue placing, at the very least, one IPPP worker within Friendship Centres and local Indigenous organizations across Metro Vancouver.

3

Address Racism and Bias towards Indigenous peoples within government social services

Given accounts of feelings of judgement and a lack of safety, it is recommended that there are efforts to address forms of racism and bias within government social service provision which directly prevents Indigenous community members from accessing services and supports. This recommendation aligns with [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #57](#): an intention to train public servants in "intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism" (p.219). Coupled with creating an anti-racist and inter-culturally competent government environment, hiring Indigenous professionals in leadership positions and service provision roles has proven highly beneficial according to the IPPP evaluation.

4

Advocate for Increased Subsidized Housing and Support Services in Surrey

The IPPP Team described that they are experiencing increasing need for affordable and subsidized housing and social services because Surrey's Indigenous population is growing. They discussed how housing low-income Indigenous families and individuals has proven difficult. There is urgent need for affordable, secure, and safe housing in Surrey. It is recommended that MSDPR advocate for increased subsidized housing and support services in Surrey.

All Our Relations.

