

Port Alberni Friendship Center News & Updates



Fall
2020
edition

COVID's impacts on Mental Health and Addictions

It has been 7 months of the pandemic, and winter is fast approaching. Mental health issues related to our lock down



and the pandemic are especially hard for people dealing with anxiety, depression, substance misuse/ addiction and other mental health disorders. The relapse and overdose rate has increased by 30% since March 2020.

Our Mental Health and Addictions counselor, [Brendon Gibson](#) is here to help either by phone or in person!

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or substance use issues, please reach out or refer to Brendon. Our center provides a safe, sanitized space with masks available for appointments.

Please call 250-723-8281, extension 228 to book an appointment.

FREE Infant Toddler Certificate Program

We are excited to announce that we are partnering with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to deliver the Infant Toddler Certificate Program.

The program will run from January 4, 2021 until August 30, 2021 and will include both the Infant Toddler practicum as well as the Special Needs practicum.

Tuition fees and incentives are covered for qualified candidates.

For more information or an application package, please call 250 723-8281:

Carol Maltais. ext #226 or email: cmaltais@pafriendshipcenter.com or

Michelle Hnennyj, ext# 243 or email: mhnennyj@pafriendshipcenter.com



Update on Programs & Services



Since March 23 when the impact of Covid-19 was really beginning to be seen and felt, the Port Alberni Friendship Center saw the huge need to continue to support our community. Although our Outreach and in-office services ceased to be delivered face-to-face, we have continued to offer support via phone, email, Facebook and Zoom. Urgent cases that require in-person support or the signing of documents has been accomplished through the

booking of designated space allowing for social distancing and strictly adhering to our center's COVID protocols and procedures.

The Port Alberni Friendship Center continues to provide the following programs as well as some additional support as follows:

- Family Support
- Early Childhood Development
- Youth Employment Skills & Training Program (STEPS)
- Family and Poverty Law Advocacy programs
- Mental Health & Addictions counseling
- Parenting groups (see more info below)
- Family & Youth nights (see info below)

COVID updates and changes to operations:

Childcare Center:

Throughout COVID, our childcare center remained open to essential workers. COVID has hit our families incredibly hard and as such, many have not been able to return with their children. We have been working closely with licensing and public health to ensure that all children and staff are kept safe and healthy and we are strictly adhering to COVID policies and procedures including the transporting of children from the Out of School program. Our Language Nest has also been able to continue with our two elder fluent speakers through the use of weekly Zoom sessions.

Our childcare center has four programs: 3 - 5 year, multi-age, Infant Toddler, and Out of School care. Call Maggie King to inquire about available spaces.

Elders Support:

Our center is committed to taking care of our elders and understands the impact that shutdowns and isolation has had on our most vulnerable population. As such, throughout COVID, we have been taking care of our elders in the following ways:

- Weekly phone calls and Facebook check-ins
- Delivery of hampers and other essential items
- Assistance with set up of internet and other technology in order to stay connected
- Activities via Zoom and other digital platforms

Parenting groups:

While our weekly drop-in parenting groups have ceased since the pandemic appeared, we have continued to provide weekly cooking group and our Brighter Futures parenting program. In order to keep clients, guests and staff safe, attendance at groups is by invitation only and is limited to family units on a rotating basis. Cooking groups are offered through Zoom while in person groups (within one's family unit), are held within our gym which allows for safe distancing. A maximum of 3 households weekly are provided with the needed ingredients and all join in via Zoom. A requirement for attendance is that the participant has a device and access to internet/WiFi.

Family & Youth nights:

Family/Youth nights have resumed based on a family unit, invitation only basis and are occurring each Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Families enjoy the opportunity to get out and spend time together playing, getting creative and sharing snacks in our gym while under the gentle and enthusiastic guidance of our Youth Worker.

Cultural/Events:

As can be expected, due to the restrictions cause by the pandemic, other programs such as our cultural and community events, cultural dance and drumming nights and all other events that see large crowds have been cancelled or postponed pending Public Health direction. To ensure the safety of all community and staff, our center also has had to cease rentals of all our spaces. We will provide updates on changes as they come via newsletters and website updates.

COVID support:

Since COVID started impacting our community and our programs, our center has been supporting the community in several ways. We have been providing families, elders and individuals with food hampers on a weekly basis, hot lunches and fruit bags five days a week to walk in guests, delivery of coupons, paperwork and other needs on a case by case basis. Through COVID related funding geared toward supporting elders, we have been able to provide a limited number of elders with tablets, WiFi and tech support in learning how to use Zoom so that they can stay connected to their community, family, and PAFC programs. Funding has also allowed us to hire additional staff to ensure the center and our daycare are kept sanitized, safe and clean.

Annual General Meeting 2020

The Port Alberni Friendship Center held it's Annual General Meeting via Zoom on September 29, 2020. it was an excellent turn out and a huge success!

There were four positions up for election and we are pleased to announce our elected Board members as follows:

John Barney, Charlotte Wishart, Sharean Van Volsen and Richard Samuel.

We would also like to warmly welcome our youth representative, Dallas Papineau to the PAFC Board of Directors.

We look forward to what the future holds and to sharing challenges, changes and successes.



Port Alberni Friendship Center
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