

2024
Annual Community Report

PEACHLAND | WEST KELOWNA | KELOWNA | LAKE COUNTRY



— CENTRAL OKANAGAN —
FOUNDATION

empowering generations to give.

Building Legacies, Strengthening Communities

We believe in the power of community!

By mobilizing donations, ideas, and local energy, we turn generosity into sustainable impact.

Together, we support vital programs, strengthen local organizations, and create a legacy that enriches lives today and for generations to come.



A word from Kristine Bugayong, Executive Director

As I reflect on the past year, I am profoundly grateful for the **resilience, dedication, and compassion** that define our community. At Central Okanagan

Foundation, we have witnessed the impact of your generosity as it transforms lives, uplifts communities, and strengthens the Okanagan region in enduring ways. From addressing immediate needs in housing and mental health to supporting initiatives that nurture **cultural and educational growth**, our collective efforts are making a meaningful difference.

In 2024, the Foundation, supported by donors and partners, distributed **over \$6 million in grants**, reaching a diverse range of charitable organizations across the Central Okanagan. This funding provides **vital support** for programs that address urgent needs in areas like housing, mental health, and end-of-life care, offering stability and compassion to individuals and families facing challenging circumstances. These stories of resilience and transformation remind us that our mission goes beyond financial support—it's about **fostering hope and creating opportunities for a brighter, more inclusive future** for all.

This year, Central Okanagan Foundation was honored to be recognized among **Canada's Top 50 Equitable Funders**, a testament to our commitment to advancing equity and inclusion in the Central Okanagan. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our dedication to this cause, knowing there is still much work to be done.

On behalf of **Central Okanagan Foundation's team**, I extend heartfelt thanks to our donors, partners, and community members who have joined us on this journey. **Together, we are creating a legacy of impact** that will shape our community for generations. Let's continue to support one another, embrace innovation, and **strengthen the bonds that make the Okanagan a place we are all proud to call home.**

Staff

Our staff bring a wealth of experience, passion, and dedication to this work. They are the champions supporting our many partnerships, grantees, donors, and community initiatives.



Abbie Norrish
Manager, Grants &
Community Initiatives



Bonnie Clarke
Administrative Associate



Julie Belgrove
Accounting Technician



Lisa Watson
Office Administrator



Niveria Oliveira
Manager, Reaching Home



Paulyn Chua
Finance Manager

Cover image credit: CRIS (Community Recreational Initiatives Society) crisadaptive.ca

Central Okanagan Foundation acknowledges our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tmx^wúla^ʔx^w (land) of the syilx / Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. **We recognize, honour, and respect the syilx / Okanagan lands upon which we live, work, and play.**

2024 by the numbers

Grants distributed in 2024

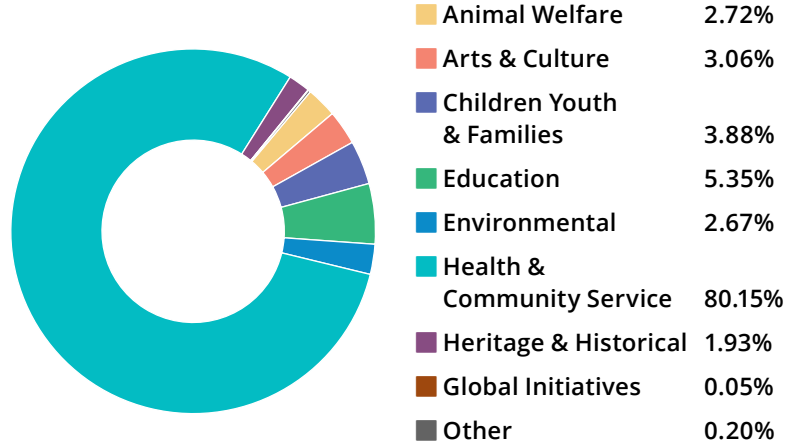
Total Grant Distributions
(without Reaching Home)

\$3,819,000

Grant Distributions from the
Reaching Home Program

\$2,202,000

Grants types by \$ distributed in 2024



\$6m+

distributed in 2024

325

grants made

\$167,500

awarded in bursaries
& scholarships

\$35m

total amount granted
in our history

156

charities received grants

242

donations to the
Foundation in 2024

\$47m

in assets under
management

\$3.6m

received in donations

357

funds managed

To view our financial statements, visit www.centralokanaganfoundation.org



We are one of Canada's
Top 50 Equitable Funders!

#LeadWithEquity

FUTURE OF GOOD x OUAKE LAB

We are excited to announce that we have been named one of Future of Good's and QuakeLab's **Top 50 Equitable Funders who #LeadWithEquity**. We're actively advancing equity and inclusion in our work every day. There's still much more to be done, and we're dedicated to continuing this important journey forward.

Donors support their favourite charities

When a donor is certain about what they'd like to support, they can set up a fund with us and name a specific charity to receive grants from their fund, in perpetuity.

Legacy of Care:

The Britta McNeill Fund

When Britta McNeill passed away in 2014, her legacy of generosity and service was solidified through a gift in her will, establishing a Donor-Designated Fund with Central Okanagan Foundation. Britta, a trailblazer in physiotherapy who made her home in Canada after leaving her native Finland, dedicated her life to helping others. **Britta's passion for community and compassion for those in need lives on through the Britta McNeill Fund.**

This fund, designated to support specific causes, has since **granted over \$157,000 to five impactful organizations.** In the last fiscal year alone, it provided a \$50,000 grant to the **Canadian Mental Health Association's Rent Bank**, helping prevent homelessness for individuals facing financial crises, and a \$15,000 grant to **Junior Achievement of BC**, fostering financial literacy and skills for youth.

Britta's story exemplifies the impact one can have through a Donor Designated Fund. By setting up a fund during one's lifetime or in your will, donors ensure that their chosen causes are supported in perpetuity, leaving a meaningful legacy that continues to make a difference.



Would you like to join Britta in creating lasting support for the causes you cherish?

Contact us at 250-861-6160 to learn more about setting up a Donor Designated Fund.



Grants In Action:

Canadian Mental Health Association's Rent Bank

A Lifeline for Renters in Crisis

The **Central Okanagan Rent Bank**, an initiative of the **Canadian Mental Health Association Kelowna**, offers a vital safety net for individuals and families facing unexpected financial hardships. Through funding from the Britta McNeill Fund, the Rent Bank is able to provide interest-free loans of up to \$1,500, **helping renters avoid eviction and regain financial stability.**

Beyond loans, the Rent Bank connects clients with critical resources like financial literacy education, rental assistance, and other community support. This holistic approach not only helps individuals stay in their homes but also empowers them to build a sustainable future.

As of 2024, **the Rent Bank has supported 147 households to date, providing over \$99,000 in emergency loans and benefiting 381 individuals**—and those numbers continue to grow. With the ongoing housing challenges in the Okanagan, the Britta McNeill Fund's contribution has been a cornerstone in helping people maintain their housing, ensuring stability and hope for those in need.

Empowering Youth with Financial Literacy through Junior Achievement BC

With support from the Britta McNeill Fund, **Junior Achievement of British Columbia (JABC)** is equipping young people in the Central Okanagan with essential financial skills. **Reaching approximately 1,875 students in 2024**, JABC's programs, such as "Dollars with Sense" and "Personal Finance," teach practical financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship, filling gaps in the standard curriculum.

This grant is building a generation of financially capable and resilient youth, ready to take on the challenges of adulthood.

With Agency Funds...

Charities create their own source of stable funding

More than 80 charities have set up their own Agency Fund with us. Their fund is invested so that earnings are granted back to the charity, year after year.

Peachland Wellness Centre, creating a future where everyone feels connected, cared for, and supported.

For the **Peachland Wellness Centre (PWC)**, fostering connection and supporting well-being have always been at the heart of their work. Since establishing **an Agency Fund with the Central Okanagan Foundation in 2016**, PWC has enjoyed a **reliable source of annual funding** that enables them to sustain and enhance critical services for the Peachland community.

The grants provided through this fund are essential to PWC's financial health, allowing them to cover operational costs where other funding falls short. This flexibility supports everything from supplies for senior services to program outreach—resources crucial for helping

community members **embrace healthy, independent lives**. As PWC's Better at Home Coordinator, T. Schweers, explains, *"This funding supports our efforts to meet the unique needs of our community and **enhances the quality of life** for those in need of support and assistance."*

PWC established their fund with the Foundation to create a dependable financial resource, aligning with their mission to support residents through education, information, and outreach. Today, this support is especially important as PWC faces increased demand and aims to secure additional funding for 2025 to expand access to their services. Rick Ingram, PWC's Board Chair, highlights the fund's importance, saying, *"The certainty of receiving funds from the Foundation, supports our efforts to provide services and programs that are critical for community members aging in place and the caregivers who support them."*

Real-Life Impact: Evie's Story

For clients like **Evie Swanstrom**, PWC's programs provide both practical assistance and peace of mind. As Evie shared, *"The support provided through PWC gives me and my family peace of mind, knowing I have access to the **resources and support I need**."* This sentiment resonates across PWC's programs, which offer residents a lifeline in times of need, fostering connection, reducing isolation, and enhancing mental and physical well-being.

Central Okanagan Foundation is proud to stand alongside PWC, empowering them to fulfill their mission and strengthen the community. Together, we're creating a future where every resident has access to the **care and support they need for a fulfilling life**.

To make a donation or learn more about Peachland Wellness Centre go to www.peachlandwellnesscentre.ca



Kristine Bugayong, Central Okanagan Foundation, Rick Ingram, PWC, Milly Marshall, PWC

Starbright Children's Development Centre, Creating a Legacy of Support for Families.

For nearly 60 years, **Starbright Children's Development Centre** has empowered families by providing early intervention and specialized therapies for children with developmental needs. Since **establishing a Charitable Agency Fund with the Central Okanagan Foundation in 1985**, Starbright has relied on this partnership to fund projects that strengthen accessibility, safety, and family support.

Recent grants have enabled Starbright to install essential safety features,

like protective fencing and accessible doors, while a significant contribution toward **a new wheelchair lift will soon make their buildings fully accessible for all families**. These improvements reflect Starbright's family-centered approach, allowing parents to be active partners in their child's progress.

"Starbright has always been a place where families find support and encouragement, knowing they're not alone," says the team at Starbright. The centre's dedication to its mission is felt every day by the families they serve, **creating brighter futures, one child at a time**.

To make a donation or learn more about Starbright go to www.starbrightokanagan.ca



With our core annual granting program...

The Community Grants Program supports a wide variety of community programs and projects, along with multi-year operational grants.

Giving us the greatest flexibility to meet ever changing needs in our community. Donors to this program rely on our expertise to respond to the multitude of grant applications submitted each year.



Spotlight on Community Culture

Centre culturel francophone de l'Okanagan

This year, the **Centre culturel francophone de l'Okanagan (CCFO)** received a multi-year operational grant from the Central Okanagan Foundation's Community Grants Program, empowering the organization to **deepen its impact in the community**. With a mission to unite Francophones and Francophiles and to share the richness of French language and culture, CCFO has grown rapidly, expanding its programs and strengthening community connections across the region.

With the Foundation's support, CCFO has significantly expanded its team and resources, enabling the delivery of **over 130 free activities and festivals throughout the year**. These programs are designed to **bring people together across generations and backgrounds**, creating inclusive spaces for young families, teens, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and seniors. The annual funds are essential to ensuring that all

community members can attend events without financial barriers, whether they are native French speakers or simply want to engage with Canada's second official language. Occasionally, the funds may also support building enhancements to improve event hosting capabilities.

In addition to the multi-year grant, **CCFO established an Agency Fund** with Central Okanagan Foundation this year to **diversify its funding sources** and ensure long-term financial stability. *"Establishing an Agency Fund with the Central Okanagan Foundation is a transformative step for the Centre culturel francophone de l'Okanagan,"* CCFO leaders shared. *"This fund strengthens our foundation for years to come, giving us the financial stability to continue serving the Okanagan's Francophone and Francophile communities with vibrant educational and artistic programs that bring people together."*

One of CCFO's key projects is the

\$635,000
granted to **30**
organizations that provide
support to local residents

Community Grants Fall Project Grant Recipients:

| |
|--|
| Autism Okanagan Association |
| Be the Change Earth Alliance Society |
| Central Okanagan Community Foodbank Soc. |
| Central Okanagan Emergency Shelter Society |
| Dress for Success Kelowna Society |
| Friends of Okanagan Rail Trail Society |
| Impact Toolbox |
| Inner Fish Theatre Society |
| Kelowna & District SHARE Society |
| Lake Country Art Gallery Society |
| Living Lakes Canada Society |
| Niteo Africa Society |
| Okanagan Symphony Society |
| Project Literacy Central Okanagan Society |
| Starbright Children's Development Centre |
| Take a Hike Youth Mental Health Foundation |
| The Central Okanagan Hospice Association |
| The University of British Columbia |
| YMCA of Southern Interior BC |

development of family-oriented activities and educational programs to rejuvenate its customer base and reach people of all ages. Already well-known for events like Maplefest, the annual Christmas Market, the Francophone film festival, and the French book fair, CCFO aims to strengthen its role as a cultural partner for local schools and community members of all ages who want to learn more about the beauty and diversity of French culture.

CCFO is proud of **its role in bridging cultures and fostering inclusion**. From language courses to cultural festivals, each event strengthens community ties and celebrates diversity. Through partnerships with other cultural and social organizations, CCFO enriches the Okanagan, making it **a more dynamic, culturally rich place to live**.

To make a donation or learn more about the French Cultural Centre go to: www.leccfo.org

Building a Community of Compassion

How Multi-Year Support Fuels Life-Changing Impact

For many, the end of life or the loss of a loved one is an unimaginable journey of grief. The **Central Okanagan Hospice Association (COHA)** is there to ensure that no one in the Central Okanagan faces this journey alone. Through its compassionate programs, COHA creates **a safe space for individuals and families** to receive the support they need, exactly when they need it. Thanks to **multi-year funding from the Central Okanagan Foundation**, COHA can continue to strengthen this vital work.

COHA's programs are a lifeline for those grieving and those facing end-of-life, providing personalized care that meets each person's unique needs. The heart of COHA's impact shines through in the stories of those it serves. For one family, **COHA's Art Therapy program helped their son process the loss of a loved one, equipping him with resilience for life.** Another family expressed that COHA's supportive space **helped them open up about their grief, fostering healing** not only for themselves but also in a way that rippled through their community.

In one particularly moving instance, a COHA volunteer was called to visit a client scheduled for **Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)**. Feeling lonely in his final days, the client welcomed the **calming presence of the COHA volunteer**, who stayed with him, providing solace until he took his final breath. A heartfelt message

from Callie Bristow, Regional End of Life Coordinator with MAiD, Interior Health, later acknowledged, *"Thank you for supporting this man in his final days... it meant so very much to him ♥"*

COHA is the only organization in the Central Okanagan that offers supportive care with trained volunteers in end-of-life, along with volunteers and professionals in grief and bereavement. COHA has witnessed a surge in demand, driven by the mental health crisis, the opioid epidemic, and an aging population. Over the past two years, requests for COHA's services have increased by 20-110%, depending on the program, as more people recognize the impact of compassionate care.

COHA's presence means that grieving children, isolated seniors, and families facing loss can find the understanding and support they deserve.

COHA's ability to meet diverse community needs has grown thanks to expanded programming supported by multi-year funding. Recognizing that children grieve differently from adults, COHA introduced expressive arts nights, grief camps, and outreach in partnership with School District 23. These additions ensure that **young people can process their feelings in an environment that suits them**, free from barriers that often prevent families from seeking help.

In 2022, COHA also launched new partnerships with local organizations



to reach clients experiencing traumatic loss. This collaboration with groups like the **Bridge Youth and Family Services** extends COHA's services to those who need specialized support, enhancing the reach and inclusivity of COHA's care.

The Role of Multi-Year Funding:

Central Okanagan Foundation's multi-year funding has empowered COHA to plan for the future while meeting today's needs. For COHA, this means not only stability but also the chance to dedicate resources to expanding and refining programs without the constant need for fundraising.

Multi-year support provides COHA with a solid foundation, allowing them to focus on **building a resilient community** where everyone—regardless of age, background, or circumstance—has access to compassionate end-of-life and grief support.

To make a donation or learn more about COHA go to: www.hospicecoha.org

The Power of Multi-Year Operational Grants

Sustainable impact requires stability.

Unpredictable funding makes it hard for charities to plan for the long term, retain staff, and invest in growth.

Multi-year operational grants provide the reliable, flexible support organizations need to focus on their mission.

Central Okanagan Foundation offers multi-year funding through its Community Grants program—empowering charities to build capacity, drive change, and create lasting community impact.

Community Grants

Spring Multi-Year Operational Grant Recipients:

| |
|---|
| Autism Okanagan Association |
| BC SPCA |
| Boys and Girls Clubs of the Okanagan |
| BC Lions Society for Children with Disabilities |
| Centre culturel francophone de l'Okanagan |
| The Central Okanagan Hospice Association |
| The Children's Family House Society of BC |
| Creator's Arts Centre |
| The Salvation Army Canada |
| Lake Country Health Society |
| Reach Out Counselling & Support Services |

Donors can change up their giving choices

Donors can check in with us on an annual basis to select charities and to learn about emerging community needs.



Dick & Rosemary Stewart

Honoring a Legacy of Philanthropy

The Richard John Stewart Family Fund

The **Richard John Stewart Family Fund**, named in honor of **Richard “Dick” Stewart Sr.**, stands as a tribute to a family legacy deeply rooted in philanthropy and community service. Founded by his sons, **Richard Stewart Jr. and Bill Stewart** and further championed by his son, **Richard Stewart Jr. (known to many as Dick)**, this fund represents the Stewart family’s **longstanding commitment to making a difference in the Central Okanagan**. Richard Jr., one of the founding members and first president of the Central Okanagan Foundation, served for nine years, setting a **standard of dedication** and vision that has been carried forward by his children and grandchildren.

Today, the fund is guided by **Andrea McFadden and the “G3” group**—the third generation of the Stewart family. Andrea, along with her siblings **Ben, Cynthia, and Tony**, continues to honor their parents, **Richard and Rosemary Stewart**, by involving the next generation in the fund’s granting process. The G3 group, composed of the Stewart siblings’ children and their

partners, votes annually to decide how the funds are distributed, with a **strong focus on prevention and youth mental health initiatives**. For instance, they have chosen to contribute annually to the BGC Okanagan (Okanagan Boys and Girls Club) in memory of their cousin, Andrew Scott Walker, underscoring the family’s personal connection to their community work.

The Stewart family’s philanthropic approach has evolved with the generations. Each member of the G3 group is given three votes, often choosing from a shortlist of three to five nonprofits. Some place all their votes on one organization, while others distribute them across multiple groups. The family has found value in keeping the recipient pool small, **allowing each grant to have a substantial effect**.

In addition to the endowment fund, the Stewart family’s business, **BACAS Family Wines—which includes Quails’ Gate—has supported the family fund with an annual \$10,000 donation** through the Foundation’s “flow-through” option. This allows them flexibility in addressing urgent needs, such as their recent **contribution to rebuild Camp OAC** after devastating fires—a place with deep ties for many family members.

This year, the family focused their support on **CMHA’s Bright Mindz**, an

A Donor Advised Fund is like having a private foundation without all the hassle.

The most flexible of all fund types – a **Donor Advised Fund** essentially provides you with all the benefits of having a private foundation – without all the administrative costs and responsibilities of running your own foundation. **The Foundation handles all the regulatory requirements – freeing up your time to do the part you enjoy the most – GRANTING!**

initiative that extends support to youth beyond the cutoff for government programs. Andrea and her husband were inspired by Bright Mindz after attending a healthcare event, and this interest resonated with the G3 group. While they supported other programs, such as FACT and Take A Hike, Bright Mindz received the largest allocation, reflecting **the family’s dedication to addressing critical gaps in youth mental health**.

The Stewart family’s commitment to philanthropy is **shaped by a legacy of shared values**. As Andrea recalls, her father was fond of quoting **Winston Churchill: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”** Looking to the future, Andrea is hopeful that more family members will continue to be involved with the Central Okanagan Foundation, fostering a tradition of community responsibility. Recently, they even adopted Stewart Road West through the city’s Adopt A Road program to involve younger children in volunteer activities—instilling in them the family’s values from an early age.

Through the **Richard John Stewart Family Fund**, the Stewart family honors their legacy while also preparing the next generation to carry it forward, **making a lasting impact on the Central Okanagan community**.



Stewart Family Photo, 2015

Donors support education

Donors can set up bursaries to honour individuals or to focus on specific programs or skills, and they can choose to assist recent graduates or returning students – *making education more accessible to all.*

\$167,500
in bursaries &
scholarships for students
studying in the region

Central Okanagan Foundation and the **Central Okanagan Bursary and Scholarship Society (COBSS)** have formed a meaningful partnership, empowering local students to achieve their educational goals.

Through this collaboration, Central Okanagan Foundation works closely with donors **to establish scholarship and bursary funds**, creating a lasting impact in the community. These funds are directed toward students who demonstrate potential, commitment, and financial need, ensuring that **every deserving learner has the opportunity to pursue higher education.**

COBSS plays a critical role in administering the awards on the Foundation's behalf, managing applications and ensuring that the right recipients are selected each year. With their **expertise and strong relationships** with schools across the region, COBSS makes the process seamless, allowing the Foundation

to focus on its mission of connecting donors with causes that matter. Together, the two organizations cultivate a cycle of opportunity, where **donors' generosity meets students' dreams, fostering the next generation of leaders in the Okanagan.**

This partnership not only provides financial support but also reflects a **deep investment in the community's future.** By easing the financial burden for students, Central Okanagan Foundation and COBSS open doors to education and inspire youth to succeed. The collaboration embodies the spirit of community-building, where giving, learning, and growth converge to uplift both individuals and the region as a whole.



Thank you!



Dear Ms. Kristine Bugayong & Central Okanagan Foundation,

I would like to express **my deepest gratitude** for being awarded the **Eleanor Morrison**

Bursary to aid in my pursuit of becoming a registered pharmacy technician. The journey towards advancing my career has been both a dream and a challenge that I have carried with me for over 15 years. Financial constraints, especially after being denied Employment

Insurance benefits while attending the program, have placed our family of five in a position of reliance on a single income. Your generous support has **reignited my hope and determination** to keep moving forward in a profession I am deeply passionate about.

This bursary is far more than financial aid to me; it is a beacon of encouragement and a testament to the power of community support in helping individuals achieve their dreams. The timing could not have been more pivotal. As I embark on this journey, the costs associated with licensing exams loom ahead, yet your **support has provided a solid foundation upon which I can build my future** and contribute meaningfully to the field of pharmacy. It is a profound comfort to know that as I focus on my studies, I have the backing of individuals who believe

in the potential of those striving to better their circumstances through education.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your generosity and the impact it has made not only on my life but on the future of my family. Your support has enabled me to take significant steps toward realizing a career that has been a long time aspiration. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity and am committed to making the most of this bursary with dedication and hard work. Thank you for investing in my future and for being a crucial part of my journey to becoming a pharmacy technician.

With warmest regards,

Shelly Nolin

Reaching Home Program:

Canada's Housing Strategy

In a country where everyone deserves a safe place to call home, the **Reaching Home Program** emerges as a vital initiative aimed at ending homelessness across Canada.

Launched by the **Government of Canada**, this program empowers communities to develop tailored strategies that address their unique challenges related to homelessness.

Central Okanagan Foundation plays a pivotal role in administering the Reaching Home Program, in the Central Okanagan. With a **focus on collaboration and community engagement, the foundation allocates funds to support a range of projects** designed to provide immediate relief and foster long-term solutions. The program prioritizes the most vulnerable populations, including individuals and families facing housing insecurity, Indigenous communities, and those experiencing chronic homelessness.

One of the core goals of the Reaching Home Program is to **enhance the availability of affordable housing options and support services**. This is achieved through partnerships with local organizations, creating a network of support that not only addresses housing needs but also **provides essential services such as mental health support, addiction recovery programs, and job training initiatives**.

Through the Reaching Home Program, numerous impactful projects have been funded, each telling a unique story of transformation and hope. These projects not only provide critical resources but also empower individuals to regain their independence and rebuild their lives.

As we explore the grant stories funded by the Reaching Home Program, we celebrate the resilience of those striving for a better future and the dedication of local organizations committed to creating sustainable change in the community. **Together, these efforts reflect a shared vision of a future where everyone has a place to call home**, fostering dignity, safety, and belonging for all.



SHINE: Illuminating the Path to Stable Housing for Seniors in the Central Okanagan

For seniors in the Central Okanagan facing housing insecurity, the **Seniors Outreach & Resource Centre's SHINE** (Seniors Housing Information & Navigation Ease) Program provides a lifeline. With support from the **Central Okanagan Foundation's Reaching Home funding**, SHINE's Housing Navigator guides vulnerable seniors through the complex housing landscape, connecting them to resources like **income supports, nutritional assistance, and financial planning**—all crucial for achieving lasting stability.

Take, for instance, the story of Liz, a 73-year-old Kelowna resident of 35 years. After losing her spouse, she struggled to find affordable housing on a single government pension. Through SHINE, Liz learned about the **SAFER rent subsidy** and **BC Housing options**. With the Housing Navigator's support, she secured a rental in Peachland while awaiting subsidized housing. Despite the relief of a SAFER subsidy, Liz faced another hurdle when a co-signed loan issue led to a bounced rent cheque. On the verge of eviction, she returned to SHINE for assistance. The program provided a one-time client subsidy, allowing her to stay in her home and navigate her financial challenges.

This type of dedicated support, made possible by Reaching Home funding, **enables SHINE to address immediate needs while promoting long-term resilience**. Last year alone, SHINE handled **970 calls**, offering individualized support to **219 seniors** and helping **38 secure new rental homes**. Additionally, \$17,000 in Reaching Home funds helped provide rental supplements, covering essential costs like damage deposits and first-month rent.

"Seniors are increasingly struggling with housing loss," says Ian Gerbrandt, Executive Director of Seniors Outreach & Resource Centre. "Today, they come to us not for care options, but on the verge of homelessness, often due to unaffordable rent and inflation's impact on fixed incomes."

With community partners, SHINE links seniors to resources and support networks, **offering them not only housing but hope**. Liz's journey to stability, capped by a recent move to rent-geared income housing, highlights the powerful impact of these collective efforts. "**Without SHINE, I would be homeless or worse**," she shared gratefully.

Through SHINE, the Central Okanagan Foundation's commitment to tackling homelessness finds real-life resonance, providing vulnerable seniors like Liz with the security and dignity they deserve.

To make a donation or learn more about Seniors Outreach Services Society go to: www.seniorsoutreach.ca

**REACHING
HOME**

CANADA'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

**VERS UN
CHEZ-SOI**

LA STRATÉGIE CANADIENNE DE LUTTE CONTRE L'ITINÉRIANCE



This project is funded by
the Government of Canada.

Canada

Building Pathways to Stability: The Coordinated Access Project in Kelowna

In partnership with the **City of Kelowna**, Central Okanagan Foundation proudly supports the **Coordinated Access project as part of Canada's Reaching Home Strategy**. This initiative is more than just a program; it represents a critical, community-driven response to homelessness. By working together with government and local service providers, Central Okanagan Foundation is helping to **streamline access to essential housing and support services**, ensuring individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness have a clear path toward stability and security.

Since the project's inception in April 2024, **Central Okanagan Foundation** and the **City of Kelowna** have laid foundational elements essential to Coordinated Access. Early work has included systems mapping, designed to identify existing programs and services, and assess capacity, program funders, and requirements. This foundational map acts as a blueprint, **guiding future service improvements to meet the needs of those at risk in Kelowna**. Through close collaboration with **BC Housing** and the **Homelessness Policy Directorate**, the project is continuously refined to address the unique needs of our community.

A recent step forward in this coordinated approach came in June, when the **Federal and BC Provincial Governments** announced the alignment of their homelessness program directives. This groundbreaking shift allows Kelowna to design a **coordinated housing**

and support system with standardized processes for access and referrals, using a unified information management system. This system ensures people experiencing homelessness won't have to repeatedly share their stories to access housing and related supports. Instead, it enables a **seamless and respectful experience while providing valuable data to inform** both service planning and broader strategic initiatives.

A central aspect of Coordinated Access is the integration of the **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)**. This system facilitates real-time data collection and management, which will help service providers coordinate more effectively and respond to needs more quickly. To support this integration, team members have undergone extensive training to ensure HIFIS can be deployed with maximum impact and data security.

The project also prioritizes relationships with Indigenous partners, particularly the **Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society** as the **Indigenous Homelessness Community Entity (IH-CE)**. The City of Kelowna is committed to **centering Indigenous worldviews and the knowledge of Elders and people with lived experience in developing a culturally safe and inclusive system**. By fostering a culturally informed approach, the Foundation and the City are working to build a supportive system that values Indigenous voices in planning and decision-making. This pillar of trust, inclusiveness, and humility



Stephanie Martin, City of Kelowna, Jim Boyssis, IH-CE Manager, Anna-Lyn Albers, City of Kelowna, Niveria Oliveira, Central Okanagan Foundation. At a BC Housing and Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada gathering, June 2024, with Reaching Home Communities from across BC.

aims to create a system that **embraces culture, diversity, and the strengths individuals bring** to their own journeys.

Looking ahead, the City of Kelowna, with the Foundation's support, will be engaging local service providers and creating working groups to strengthen governance and data-sharing protocols. The goal is to **transform Kelowna's housing support system into a truly collaborative network** that reflects the diversity and resilience of the community. The progress made through the Coordinated Access project not only reflects Central Okanagan Foundation's dedication to addressing homelessness but also stands as a testament to the power of collaboration. Together, **we are creating a more inclusive, resilient community where every person has a chance at a safe and stable home.**

To learn more about the partnership with the city go to: www.kelowna.ca/socialwellness

Reaching Home Funded Projects 2024-2026:

| Organization: | Project Names: |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Canadian Mental Health Association | Housing and Housing First 4 Youth |
| Canadian Mental Health Association | Bright Mindz Youth Housing |
| Canadian Mental Health Association | Central Okanagan Rent Bank (CORB) |
| Canadian Mental Health Association | Shelter Hub |
| City of Kelowna | Coordinated Access |
| John Howard Society | Bedford Place |
| Karis Support Society | Aftercare Program |
| Karis Support Society | Residential Women's Recovery Program |
| Kelowna Gospel Mission | Street Level Outreach |
| Metro Community | Metro Warming Centre and Hygiene Program |
| National Society of Hope | HOPE - Short Term Housing Supports |
| New Opportunities for Women | The Essentials Program |
| New Opportunities for Women | Shelter Hub |
| Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs | Emergency Youth Shelter & Diversion Services |
| Seniors Outreach Services Society | Seniors Housing & Navigation Ease Program |
| The Bridge Youth and Families | Bridging the Gaps - Transitional Case Mgmt |
| Turning Points Collaborative Society | Kelowna Shelter Diversion HUB |

\$2.2M
granted to **17**
organizations that provide
support to local residents





— CENTRAL OKANAGAN —
FOUNDATION

empowering generations to give.

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Connect with us!



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Building a Community of Strength and Vision

As we reflect on another impactful year, the Central Okanagan Foundation continues to play a pivotal role in fostering resilience and driving meaningful change in our community. This year's successes are a testament to the generosity of our donors, the commitment of our partners, and the tireless work of our grantees, all of whom inspire us with their **dedication to creating a stronger, more inclusive Okanagan.**

I would like to take a moment to recognize and thank **Karen Hill** for her remarkable nine years of service on the Board of Directors. Karen's wisdom, dedication, and unwavering commitment have been invaluable to the Foundation. Though her term was meant to end last year, we are deeply grateful that she chose to extend her time with us, offering critical guidance during a period of transition with a new Executive Director and a mostly new board. On a personal note, I will truly miss her guidance and friendship. **Her contributions have left a lasting mark on the Foundation and our community.**

Our **Board of Directors remains a source of strength and wisdom**, composed of individuals deeply dedicated to the Foundation's mission. At the same time, we recognize there is more work to be done to ensure our board reflects the full diversity of our community—a goal we are committed to pursuing.

I am especially excited to share that we are collaborating closely with our exceptional staff on the final stages of a long-overdue strategic plan. This initiative represents a new chapter of clarity and purpose for the Foundation, and we look forward to sharing our vision for the future with you all.

Over the past year, the Board has also focused on supporting our phenomenal Executive Director, Kristine Bugayong, as she fully embraced her role. **Her leadership has been instrumental in strengthening the Central Okanagan Foundation's presence and impact**, reestablishing us as a cornerstone of our community.

As you read through this report, I hope you see the depth of commitment and passion that drives all of us—our board, staff, donors, partners, and grantees alike. Together, we are creating a legacy of hope and possibility, one that will inspire and uplift the Okanagan for generations to come.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your partnership and trust. **Let's continue to build a community where everyone can thrive.**

*With gratitude,
Dustyn Baulkham, he/him
Board Chair*