

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

CASE STUDY



The purpose of this case study series is to highlight housing providers and programs that serve Indigenous women, youth, and families who are in need of housing support and facing child welfare intervention. The case studies, developed Summer 2017, provide information on program components and support. They also examine key practices, program highlights, challenges and successes. It is hoped this information may inform practices of other housing providers looking to create or expand wrap around support services to help families stay together.

Indigenous Housing Series: Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society Family Den

The Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (KFS) manages the Family Den (FD) program, an Indigenous family-based transitional housing program providing a range of supports in a culturally appropriate environment. The FD program assists urban-Indigenous families in crisis that are currently involved, or at risk of being involved, with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The FD program works to keep parents and children together while providing a safe, semi-supervised, substance-free home.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND SUPPORTS

- › **Housing:** Family transition housing, housing search assistance
- › **Education and skills training:** Nutrition information, speakers, employment services, education programs
- › **Personal development:** Parenting skills, group workshops, anger management, counselling, on-going emotional support, Family Assessment program, family night
- › **Cultural programs:** Roots program, men's weekly healing circles, women's weekly healing circles, traditional crafts, cultural activities and ceremonies, connections to elders, elders luncheon
- › **Cultural activities and support:** Cultural workshops, intergenerational sharing, Elder advisor, smudging, drumming, healing circles, medicine walks, cedar bark and sage collection
- › **Other services and activities:** Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), legal advocacy, transportation, child development programs, community computer lab, gardening, external program referrals, field trips



KEY PRACTICES

Through the FD program, KFS takes a family-centered approach, working to prevent family separation. When separation occurs KFS works with the family to support reunification. KFS offers a number of programs and services for both parents and children, tailored to fit each family’s needs. The minimum participant requirements include: children attend school, parents attend parenting classes, families abide by MCFD requirements, and families provide volunteer service to ‘give back’ to the community. If an individual has a history of addiction, addiction counseling may be required.

KFS incorporates Indigenous culture into the FD program and its other programs and services. Representing the four aspects of the medicine wheel, KFS supports mental, emotional, physical and spiritual growth. Specific cultural activities include healing circles, traditional crafts and engagement with Elders.

Incorporating Indigenous cultural practices and teachings provides many benefits, including developing greater connections to family, history, community and creating mentoring opportunities. KFS respects individual cultural practice and participation in their cultural activities is voluntary.

FAMILY DEN STATISTICS

Housing units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-plex: Individual kitchen, living room, bathroom
Estimated clients per year (#)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 (including parents and children)
Length of stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated average: 6 months • Maximum: 1 year +/- • Minimum: 3 months
Estimated Indigenous clients (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous specific program: 100%
Referrals, intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals: Ministry of Justice, Courts, MCFD, internal KFS referral, outreach program • Intake: current or imminent MCFD involvement, team based assessment for best fit • Waitlist: needs and best-fit based
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule: as-needed, varies • Full time: none • Casual: 4-5 (overnight shift)
Key funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government: MCFD
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government: MCFD, Aboriginal Housing Management Association/BC Housing, First Nations Health Authority, University of British Columbia-Okanagan, Public Health Agency of Canada, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation, School District, Ministry of Justice





PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- › **Unit furnishings:** Families move into units furnished with community donations. When families depart, they can take some of the furnishings if they need them. KFS developed strong community relationships to establish this practice.
- › **Wraparound supports:** The breadth of support programs available through KFS and its partners makes the FD program possible. A Family Assessment worker manages the FD case-load, relying on in-house and external program referrals to provide programming and supports for residents. Casual staff are used on an as-needed basis, but there are no full-time, live-in FD program staff.
- › **Preschool:** KFS operates Skə mxist Preschool, which children in the FD program may attend. With children in school, parents can focus on their education, employment, or personal goals. Skə mxist Preschool incorporates Indigenous culture including nsyilxcə n language instruction, traditional songs, traditional foods, drum-making and other craft workshops.

CHALLENGES

- › **Housing availability:** KFS works with FD families to transition them into other housing, but the lack of affordable market and social housing in Kelowna makes this challenging.
- › **Funding:** KFS would prefer to provide full-time live-in staff for the FD program, but it lacks core funding for the administrative hours and staffing. As a result, KFS focuses the FD program intake on lower-risk clients, capable of being moderately independent. The need for a family reunification-based housing and supports program tailored towards high-risk clients is there, but developing the capacity to serve that population requires increased funding. In addition, required building maintenance and renovations are costly and difficult to fund.
- › **Long term follow-up:** While it is easy to follow-up with former FD clients who continue to access other KFS programs and supports, if they stop accessing services or move away it is extremely difficult to maintain contact

or follow-up due to a lack of resources and privacy restrictions.

SUCCESSES

- › **Structure:** KFS is a 'ground level' community Friendship Centre with an open-door policy. This approach provides staff with greater insights and contacts than a stand-alone program. Staff are often already familiar with families prior to FD program intake. This knowledge enables them to develop tailored plans, unique to each individual and family.
- › **Defining success:** while KFS sees success as specific to the individual, successful outcomes of the FD program include: family reunification, no further MCFD involvement, and development of the skills to better manage and maintain stable and adequate housing.

SPOTLIGHT

GRANDMOTHER'S LODGE

When parents lose custody of their children, grandmothers commonly become caregivers to their grandchildren. KFS is working to develop a 'Grandmother's Lodge,' similar to the Family Den program but tailored to Indigenous extended families, including grandmothers, to support keeping siblings together with other family members.

“Last year, our receptionist answered approximately 7,728 phone calls, fielded 271 e-mails, and greeted around 8,149 people who walked through our doors seeking our services. That's 16,148 contacts!”