

For Immediate Release
July 8th, 2019

Alberta's Largest Post-Emergency Violence Shelter Moves Forward in Reconciliation: Prioritizing Needs of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Overrepresented in Shelters

(Calgary, Alta.) The Brenda Strafford Centre is launching a new cultural space and innovative programming to meet the needs of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit individuals and families that call the Centre their home. The Centre has seen an increase in Indigenous families seeking violence intervention services; currently representing 27% of those seeking services at the Centre despite making up 6.7% of the province's female population. "It is extremely important to us to meet the needs of Indigenous families affected by violence and walk alongside Indigenous experts in our community to inspire cultural resurgence and reconciliation among our shelter network, staff and all individuals and families we serve," says Meaghan Reid, Executive Director of the Brenda Strafford Centre.

The designated cultural space is undergoing finishing touches at the Centre that provides housing and supportive services for up to 85 families and 115 children at risk of violence at any given time. Community and Diversity Partnerships Lead, Pamela Pizarro is working with consultant, Cynthia Bird to organize Indigenous programming that supports healing from the traumatic effects of family violence. Now in its third week, the Grandmother Turtle program facilitated in partnership with Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society and Parent Link Centre, engages children of all backgrounds in the seven sacred teachings through songs, dance, and storytelling over eight weeks. Set to take place this fall are The Bird / The Pîyesîs sessions, a programming series that inspires reconciliation. The series will include beading and ribbon skirt making classes, a blanket exercise and more that builds on current programming of a sharing circle and Elder visits.

The Centre is striving to improve and expand its Indigenous programming to better meet the needs of its large and diverse clientele. While 27% of families the Centre serves identify as Indigenous, the Centre also serves many people born outside of Canada. "It is extremely valuable that anyone we serve has the opportunity to learn about and engage with other cultures including First Nations, Metis and Inuit traditions, history, reconciliation and resurgence," says Pizarro. Under the direction of Family Programs, Pizarro has put together a call for Advisory Committee Members that will work alongside her to align shelter policies and programming with the needs of multicultural and Indigenous individuals and families.



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About the Brenda Strafford Centre:

In 2018, the Brenda Strafford Centre served 139 adults and 196 children and youth at risk who have experienced family violence by providing them with safe housing and supportive services such as trauma-informed counselling, respite childcare, access to life's essentials, financial assistance for education and more.

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