



FRASER RIVER DISCOVERY CENTRE SOCIETY

# Annual Report 2024



# Table of Contents

Deepening Our Impact	3
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About Us	5
----------	---

Key 2024 Initiatives	7
----------------------	---

Funding & Financial Stewardship	10
---------------------------------	----

People	11
--------	----





# Deepening Our Impact in 2024

In 2024, the Fraser River Discovery Centre (FRDC) deepened its impact—engaging and educating thousands of participants, refining programs, and launching new projects that connect communities more meaningfully to the Fraser River and its vital role in our region. Over 23,000 students, educators, and community members explored the river's ecosystems, history, and future through our programs.

The past year was transformative for the Centre. We navigated challenges while expanding programs, enhancing exhibits, and strengthening community outreach. Our team brought innovative educational programs, interactive exhibits, and community initiatives to life. These efforts invited individuals of all ages to explore the river's ecological significance and its role in sustaining communities and biodiversity.

We continued to centre Indigenous ways of knowing by working closely with our partners at the Musqueam Indian Band (MIB) to develop *xʷtatəlləm ʔə kʷ šxʷəlməxʷaʔ syəθ ʔiʔ snəwəyət ʔi ʔə tə ʔi ńa staləw* (Place of Learning about the Indigenous Heritage and Teachings of the River).



This report highlights **our key activities, financial stewardship, and the partnerships that make our work possible**. From inspiring educational initiatives to collaborative partnerships with local organizations, 2024 demonstrated the power of shared vision in preserving and promoting the Fraser River.

On behalf of the entire FRDC team, we extend our **deepest gratitude to our members, supporters, partners, donors, and visitors**. Your commitment ensures the Fraser River remains a place of learning, culture, and sustainability for generations to come.

As we launch our 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, we look forward to reaching even greater milestones together. **Thank you for being an essential part of our success.**

**Karen Lee**  
Executive Director

**Mark Rizzo**  
Chair



*Karen Lee & George the Sturgeon, 2025  
photo: Carolyn Richard*





Lucille Johnstone Workboat Parade, 2024  
Photo: George Bencze

# About Us

## Who We Are – “The Voice of the Fraser”

### Our Vision

*A living, working Fraser - with thriving peoples, ecosystems and livelihoods - from headwaters to the Salish Sea.*

### Our Mission

*To bring together the many voices and stories of the Fraser, to discover, celebrate, and inspire passionate stewards of the river.*

Established in 1989, the Fraser River Discovery Centre Society (FRDCS) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to connecting communities through the discovery and celebration of the Fraser River’s historical, cultural, and ecological significance. [Our 17,000-square-foot interpretive centre](#) on New Westminister’s riverfront boardwalk offers exhibits, education programs, and events that showcase the river’s role in shaping the region’s past, present, and future.



## Our Three Pillars of Sustainability

The principle of sustainability—meeting the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs—guides all FRDC planning and operations. Sustainability is the strategic context for our work, framing the Fraser River as one of BC's largest economic drivers, a globally important biodiverse ecosystem, and a culturally significant waterway.

These three guiding pillars reflect the river's interconnected roles:

- **Environmental**—A globally significant ecosystem.
- **Socio-cultural**—A place to live, work, and thrive.
- **Economic**—A vital engine driving British Columbia's economy.

## Our Convenor Role

With over 70% of British Columbia's population residing in the Fraser River Basin, partnership, consultation, and collaboration with communities throughout the region are key to our success. Our relationships with diverse stakeholders shape planning, programs, events, and funding opportunities—ensuring that the Fraser continues to inspire passionate river stewards for generations to come.



# Key 2024 Initiatives

## Education Programs

- Delivered **310 programs**, reaching **8591 participants** from **168 schools** across 31 school districts.
- Reached 10,049 students basin-wide through River Champions, our grant-funded climate resilience initiative—exceeding our targets.
- Developed a new program, *Knowing the River*, in collaboration with Southlands Elementary School teachers.
- Provided **\$12,600 in subsidies to under-served schools**, ensuring equitable access to environmental education.

## Public Engagement

- **Adult Workshops:** Launched 3 pilot workshops in response to visitor feedback. 38 adults participated in a meditative drawing session, a full moon sound bath, and a stinging nettles workshop. We're expanding this programming in 2025!
- **Guided Tours:** Led 7 tours with 138 participants.
- **River Basin Days:** Ran 15 programs, **connecting 236 participants with green spaces throughout the Fraser River Basin**.
- **Super Weekends & Discovery Days:** Offered 17 programs, with 3,061 participants exploring seasonal phenomena in the river basin.
- **Summer Camps:** Held 8 weeks of summer camps, where 68 participants explored themes like *Making Sense of the Fraser* and *Tribu-Tales*.
- **Birthday Parties:** In 2024 we hosted 55 parties, with 588 attendees!



RiverFest, 2024  
Photo: George Bencze

## Special Events

- **RiverFest:** Our annual celebration of BC and World Rivers Day featured themed guided walks, live performances, a family fun zone, and the Lucille Johnstone Workboat Parade. Thanks to Presenting Sponsor Port of Vancouver and community partners including Arts New West, the Wooden Boat Society, and the New Westminster Museum and Archives. **Riverfest 2024 welcomed 4,143 attendees.**
- **Fraser River Hall of Fame Gala:** Our largest fundraising event honours noteworthy contributions to the Fraser River's health and sustainability. The 2024 event welcomed 186 attendees and celebrated the Catherwood Family.



## Exhibitions


In 2022, FRDC staff—guided by community input—developed a collaborative interpretive plan to steer our exhibition work. This living document builds on our three pillars of sustainability and evolves through ongoing community engagement. As we work towards *xʷtatəlləm*, the plan guides how we tell the Fraser River's diverse stories.

At its heart, **the Fraser River is both a life source and a living story**—shaped by, and shaping, the communities it sustains. From unique ecosystems to vibrant human cultures, and as a central hub for economic activity, the river reflects the dynamic relationships among people, place, and environment.

Two guiding lenses inform our exhibition development:

- **Interconnectedness & Systems Thinking** – exploring ecological and human systems.
- **Community, Relationships, & Culture** – uplifting truth, justice, joy, and dreaming.





In the fall of 2024, FRDC staff began regular planning meetings with Musqueam Museum and Archives to codevelop an exhibition set to open in summer 2025. Our temporary exhibits in 2024 included:

## *Semá:th Xo:tsa: Great Gramma's Lake* July 1 – Sept 2, 2024

This powerful exhibition, inspired by the illustrated children's book *Semá:th Xo:tsa: Great Gramma's Lake*, invited visitors to reimagine the thriving presence of Semá:th Xó:tsa through vibrant imagery and storytelling. Developed by The Reach Gallery Museum and supported by the Government of Canada, the exhibit centred memory and imagination as tools for environmental restoration and cultural continuity. The experience was further brought to life through a roving performance featuring large-scale animal puppets, which captivated audiences inside FRDC and in the surrounding area.



## *Downstream Where the Waters Mix* Dec 2024 – Mar 31, 2025

Installed as a mini exhibition, *Downstream Where the Waters Mix* was curated by Nlaka'pamux artist Nadine Spence and offered a profound exploration of Indigenous relationships with water. Featuring the Community Element Chest, a short documentary, and two pieces of regalia, the exhibit created space for cultural storytelling, personal reflection, and meaningful dialogue.



# Funding & Financial Stewardship

Our work is made possible by the generosity of our supporters and partners. In 2024, FRDC saw a 22% increase in earned revenue, driven by strong program participation and increased donor contributions. We received a clean audit report for 2024.

Thank you to our supporters!

## Funding Sources (2024)

- **Government:** Government of Canada, Province of British Columbia, City of New Westminster, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, BC Hydro
- **Corporate Sponsors:** CN Rail, BNSF Railroad, FortisBC, Ledcor, Loren Nancke Chartered Professional Accountants, SAAM Towage, Seaspan, SRY Railways, TransMountain, Tree Island Steel, Western Canada Marine Response Corp.
- **Foundations:** Canadian Association of Science Centres, G&F Foundation, McLean Foundation, New Westminster Legion Branch 2, RBC Community Together, Real Estate Foundation of BC, TD Friends of the Environment Fund
- **Personal Donors:** With special thanks to Maureen Albanese, Fiona Beales, Judith Berlin, Thomas Corsie, Allen Domaas, Philip Douglas, Angela Gazzola, Kathleen Higgins, Brian Kermer, Brandon Lee, Karen Lee, David Marjoribanks, Todd Martin, Margaret Mason, Mark Rizzo, Heather Roemer, Lyle Viereck, Jennifer Whiteside, Carmen Wiseman
- **Corporate Donations:** digitally hip, Forrest Marine Ltd.
- **In-kind Donations:** Barley Merchant, Catherwood Towing Ltd., Climb Base5, Foamer's Folly, Frankie's Italian Kitchen, FreshMart, Global BC, Inn at the Quay, Organic Ocean Seafood Inc., REO Rafting, Sabai Thai Spa, Steel & Oak Brewing Co., WWS Vehicle Services Canada
- **Earned Revenue:** Admissions, Facility Rentals, Public Programs, Discovery Shop, Education Programs, Tours



# People

FRDC is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors committed to representing the geographic, economic, cultural, and social diversity of the Fraser River Basin. Their collective expertise and leadership help guide our mission and strategic direction.

## 2023–2024 Board of Director

- **Mark Rizzo, Chair** – Director, Marine Canada, Parkland Corporation
- **Kathleen Higgins, Past Chair** – Retired Partner, Young Anderson
- **Lyle Viereck, Vice Chair** – Principal, Viereck Consulting Ltd.
- **Allen Domaas, Secretary** – Nordic Star Services Ltd. & Retired CEO Fraser Port Authority
- **Brett Pavan, Treasurer** – Partner, Loren Nancke Chartered Professional Accountants
- **Tom Corsie, Director** – Retired VP Vancouver Fraser Port Authority
- **Michael Forrest, Director** – President, Forrest Marine Ltd.
- **Nures Kara, Director**
- **Mandev Mann, Director** – Solicitor, City of Vancouver
- **Todd Martin, Director** – HSE Quality Manager, Bridgemans Services Group



*River Basin Days  
Campbell Valley, Sept 2024*



# Staff

FRDC is supported by a dynamic team of core staff, part-time team members, co-op students, seasonal staff, and volunteers who bring our mission to life through education, engagement, and operations.

## Core Team

- Karen Lee, Executive Director
- Petra Maior, Education Programs Manager
- Alex Johansen, Public Engagement Manager
- Helen Lo, Public Engagement Manager
- Arielle Garsson, Program Coordinator (River Champions)
- Alexis McGillivray, Programs Assistant
- Kristen Hogeterp, Interpreter
- Elena Le, Interpreter
- Carlo Santos, Interpreter
- Calista Tumaru, Interpreter

## Contractors

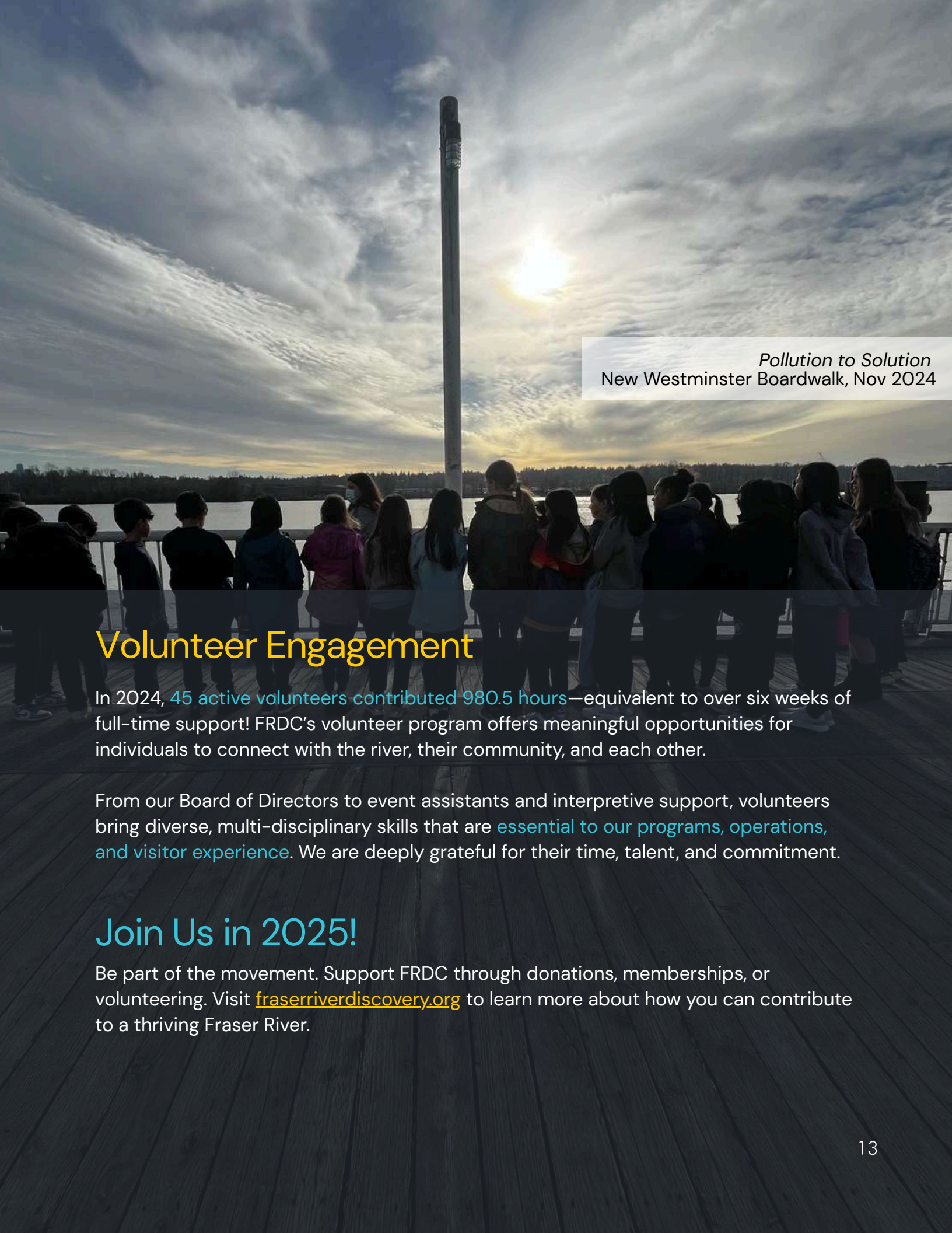
- Terry Sparrow, x<sup>w</sup>tatəlləm Indigenous Relationships and Engagement Coordinator
- Susan Jury, Bookkeeper
- digitally hip, Information Technology support
- Stephen Bruyneel, Senior Advisor, x<sup>w</sup>tatəlləm Development

## Temporary and On-call Staff

Sarah Chow, Kathleen Nguyen, Jessie Reyes, Natasha Sing, Kyra Tamagi







*Pollution to Solution*  
New Westminster Boardwalk, Nov 2024

## Volunteer Engagement

In 2024, 45 active volunteers contributed 980.5 hours—equivalent to over six weeks of full-time support! FRDC's volunteer program offers meaningful opportunities for individuals to connect with the river, their community, and each other.

From our Board of Directors to event assistants and interpretive support, volunteers bring diverse, multi-disciplinary skills that are essential to our programs, operations, and visitor experience. We are deeply grateful for their time, talent, and commitment.

## Join Us in 2025!

Be part of the movement. Support FRDC through donations, memberships, or volunteering. Visit [fraserriverdiscovery.org](https://fraserriverdiscovery.org) to learn more about how you can contribute to a thriving Fraser River.



# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

**"I appreciated how the centre enabled the children to learn more about solutions to pollution."**

**"The employees were so nice and great with the students!"**

**"The kids loved the energy of our teacher ... she was very energetic and passionate, the kids all said they had an amazing time."**

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