



FRASER RIVER DISCOVERY CENTRE SOCIETY

Annual Report 2025

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Our Bones are Made of Salmon, 2025
Photo: George Bencze

Charting A New Direction

In 2025, the Fraser River Discovery Centre (FRDC) continued to grow its impact while navigating a changing social and economic landscape. We launched a new three-year strategic plan centred on community, relationships, and sustainable growth, alongside a new strategic fundraising plan designed to diversify revenue and strengthen long-term resilience.

With the support of our partners, donors, and community, we expanded our educational programs and connected a record number of people to the Fraser and its vital role in our region. In 2025, we reached over 25,000 students, educators, and community members through our programs, exhibits, and events. We introduced new offerings for adult audiences and launched three temporary exhibits exploring the river's ecological, cultural, and economic importance.

Indigenous partnership remained central to our work. Together with our partners at the Musqueam Indian Band (MIB), we continued developing *x^wtatəlləm ʔə k^w šx^wəlməx^waʔt syəθ ʔiʔ snəwəyət ʔi ʔə tə ʔi ńa staləw* (Place of Learning about the Indigenous Heritage and Teachings of the River). This collaboration deepened our shared commitment to respectful storytelling, meaningful relationships, and ongoing learning.

This report highlights the programs, partnerships, and people that made this work possible, from educators and artists to volunteers, donors, and community partners.

As we look ahead, our vision remains steady: to celebrate and safeguard a living, working river that connects communities, economies, and generations of stewards. On behalf of the entire FRDC team, thank you for being a part of this journey. We look forward to reaching new milestones together.

Karen Lee
Executive Director

Mark Rizzo
Society Chair





I Spy, 2025
Photo: George Bencze

About Us

Who We Are – “The Voice of the Fraser”

The Fraser River Discovery Centre is a place where people come together to explore the stories, cultures, and ecosystems of one of Canada’s great waterways.

Since 1989, the Fraser River Discovery Centre Society (FRDCS) has connected communities to the river through learning, dialogue, and shared experience. Located on New Westminster’s riverfront boardwalk, our 17,000–square–foot interpretive centre offers interactive exhibits, educational programs, and community events that bring the river’s past, present, and future to life.

We are the only organization solely dedicated to interpreting and sharing the Fraser River’s stories.

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.



Our Three Pillars of Sustainability

Sustainability drives our work. It guides how we balance environmental responsibility, community well-being, and economic vitality.

The Fraser River plays many roles in the region. It is a vital ecosystem, a deeply significant cultural waterway, and a powerful economic corridor. Our work reflects this interconnected reality through three guiding principles:

- Environmental — supporting the health and resilience of the river and its ecosystems.
- Socio-cultural — honouring the river as a place of connections, cultures, and community.
- Economic — recognizing the river as a vital engine driving British Columbia's economy.

Our Convenor Role

More than 70% of British Columbia's population lives within the Fraser River Basin. The Fraser River connects communities through a common interest in its health and vitality.

As a convenor, the Fraser River Discovery Centre brings together diverse partners and perspectives and creates space for dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning.

Through these relationships, we deepen understanding of the river's role in our collective future. Our work fosters connection, stewardship, and a shared responsibility to care for this living system for generations to come.



Puppet theatre, 2025
Photo: George Bencze

Key 2025 Initiatives & Impact

Education Programs

Education remains at the heart of our work. **In 2025, we delivered 219 education programs, reaching 4,916 participants from 119 schools across 15 school districts.** Through hands-on, place-based learning, students explored topics such as salmon ecology, water health, and climate resilience.

We **launched three new programs** under the *Building Climate Resilience* series, giving students from grades K to 12 tools to tackle real-world environmental challenges and build climate literacy skills. We developed an *Intro to Birding* **online resource for educators and home learners** which is downloaded at least twice each day.

To support access for all learners, we provided 68 subsidized field trips to under-resourced schools. These subsidies helped remove financial barriers and ensure more students can learn about the Fraser River firsthand.

Public Engagement

Our public programs create opportunities for people of all ages to connect with the river and with one another. In 2025:

- Guided tours engaged 281 participants across 19 sessions
- River Basin Days connected 192 participants to green spaces throughout the region
- Super Weekends and Discovery Days welcomed over 2,100 participants across 13 programs that explored seasonal changes in the river basin
- Spring and summer camps engaged 110 children in hands-on learning

This year, we also expanded adult workshops and relaunched our *Faces of the Fraser Speaker Series*, attracting new audiences and creating new opportunities for dialogue and lifelong learning.

Together, these programs strengthened community connection to the river and supported growing interest in environmental learning and ecological stewardship.

Special Events

FRDC's special events brought the broader community together to learn about and celebrate the Fraser River

- **RiverFest**, our annual celebration of BC and World Rivers Day, welcomed nearly 4,000 attendees. The event featured community workshops, live performances, a family fun zone, and the Lucille Johnstone Workboat Parade, made possible through the generous support of Presenting Sponsor Port of Vancouver and valued community partners.
- **The Fraser River Hall of Fame Gala**, our signature fundraising event, welcomed 114 guests to honour individuals and organizations making significant contributions to the health and sustainability of the Fraser River. In 2025, we were proud to recognize the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society.

These events create shared experiences that deepen public connection to the river and build a strong sense of regional community.

Exhibitions

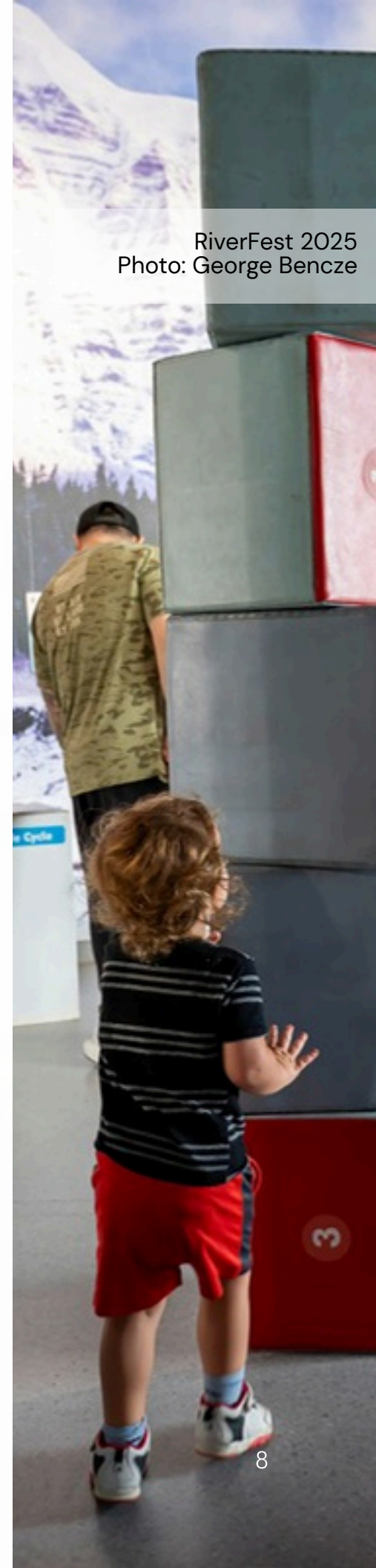
In 2025, our exhibitions connected visitors with the Fraser River's ecosystems, cultures, and communities in meaningful and accessible ways.

Through hands-on learning, art, and storytelling, our exhibitions help people understand the river's importance and their role in caring for it. This work is guided by our interpretive plan developed in 2022 with community members and supports the ongoing development of x^wtatəlləm (Place of Learning about the Indigenous Heritage and Teachings of the River).

Our approach is grounded in two key ideas:

- Understanding the connections between people, ecosystems, and the economy
- Uplifting community voices, relationships, and cultural knowledge

RiverFest 2025
Photo: George Bencze



Temporary Exhibitions in 2025

In partnership with Musqueam Museum and Archives, we continue to co-develop exhibits and programs that centre Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous-led storytelling.

Aquaculture: Farming the Waters Apr 3 – May 15, 2025

Developed by Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, this interactive exhibition invited visitors to explore fish, shellfish, and seaweed farming across Canada, from coastlines to land-based systems. Visitors fed salmon, met Canadian farmers, and learned about the technology and traditions behind aquaculture, including the millennia-old aquaculture practices of Indigenous communities.

The West Coast Tug Project Aug 17 – Sept 28, 2025

This exhibition featured artist Christina Morrison's ongoing work documenting working tugboats across British Columbia. Through painting and storytelling, it highlighted the vital role these vessels play in coastal and river communities, presenting and preserving an often-over-looked aspect of working river life.

x^wtatəlləm Nov 1, 2025 – 2026

Developed in collaboration with Musqueam Archives, this exhibition shares teachings, histories, and belongings connected to Musqueam village sites along the lower Fraser River. Told through the voices of Musqueam community members, it creates spaces for learning grounded in lived experience and Indigenous knowledge.

Funding & Financial Stewardship

Our work is made possible by the generosity of our supporters and partners.

In 2025, we received a clean audit and launched a new fundraising strategy to diversify revenue and strengthen long-term sustainability.

Our funding comes from a mix of government support, corporate sponsorships, foundations, donors, and earned revenue.

This year:

- Approximately 85% of FRDC's expenditures supported the design and delivery of core activities (programs, exhibits, and events)
- 15% supported essential operations (administration and management)

Full audited financial statements are available upon request.

Thank you to our supporters!

Quayside tour, 2025
Photo: George Bencze

Funding Sources (2025)

- **Government:** BC Gaming Commission, City of New Westminster, Employment and Social Development Canada, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, BC Hydro
- **Corporate Sponsors:** BL Pavan Inc., DP World, FortisBC, Forrest Marine, Ledcor, Loren Nancke Chartered Professional Accountants, North Arm Transportation, Parkland Corporation, Seaspan, SRY Railways, Tom-Mac Shipyards, Tourism New Westminster, TransMountain, Western Canada Marine Response Corporation.
- **Foundations:** Aqueduct Foundation and Margaret Mason, Canadian Association of Science Centres, Chris Spencer Foundation, Gloria Baylis Foundation, Hamber Foundation, Keta Legacy Foundation, Lohn Foundation, New Westminster Legion Branch 2, TD Friends of the Environment Fund, Y. P. Heung Foundation, The Zacks Family Charitable Foundation
- **Personal Donors:** With special thanks to Audrey Barnes, Fiona Beales, Canada Water Agency team 2024-25, Thomas Corsie, Brooke Davis, Allen Domaas, Lilian Fajardo, Kathleen Higgins, Susan Jury, Karen Lee, Mandev Mann, Mark Rizzo, Matthew Stradiotti, Lyle Viereck, Carmen Wiseman
- **Corporate Donations:** digitally hip, Forrest Marine, Ladner Reach Properties, Rotary Club of New Westminster
- **In-kind Donations:** Bak'd Cookies, City Avenue Market, Climb Base5, Great River Fishing Adventures, Heart & Soul Fitness, Inn at the Quay, Modo, Native Northwest, Northmen Laser and MetalWorks Ltd., Pacific Breeze Winery, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Rain City Games, Sabai Thai Spa, Simon's Soapbox, Spud, Steel & Oak Brewing Co., Taverna Greka, The Refill Stop
- **Earned Revenue:** Admissions, Facility Rentals, Public Programs, Discovery Shop, Education Programs, Tours



Tsatsu Stalqayu, RiverFest 2025
Photo: George Bencze



Spring break camp, 2025

People

FRDC is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors whose leadership and expertise help shape our strategic direction and ensure strong governance. Representing diverse perspectives from across the Fraser River Basin, the Board plays a vital role in advancing our mission and stewarding the organization's long-term sustainability.

2024–2025 Board of Directors

- **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

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
- Helen Lo, Public Engagement Manager
- Alexis McGillivray, Programs Assistant
- Jessie Reyes, Marketing Coordinator
- Kristen Hogeterp, Interpreter
- Caterina Cociani, Interpreter
- Carlo Santos, Interpreter
- Calista Tumaru, Interpreter
- Kyra Tamagi, Interpreter

Contractors

- Terry Sparrow, x^wtatəlləm Indigenous Relationships and Engagement Coordinator
- Susan Jury, Bookkeeper
- digitally hip, Information Technology support

Temporary and On-call Staff

Robert Berkowski, Cora Dickson, Joey Hadizadeh, Kathleen Nguyen, Breanna Nichol, Natasha Sing, Marli Zinga.



FRDC staff and volunteers, 2025
Photo: George Bencze



Volunteer Engagement

In 2025, 52 active volunteers contributed 1,828 hours—equivalent to more than 44 weeks of full-time support! From supporting programs and events to enhancing visitor experience, volunteers help bring the Centre to life.

Our volunteers, from the Board of Directors to event assistants and interpretive supports, contribute a wide range of skills, perspectives, and lived experience. Their generosity strengthens our programs, deepens our community connections, and expands what we are able to achieve.

We are deeply grateful for their time, talent, and dedication.

Join Us in 2026!

There are many ways to support FRDC's work. Whether through a donation, membership, or volunteering your time, your support helps connect more people to the Fraser River and its stories.

Your support helps sustain education, exhibitions, and community programs. Visit fraserriverdiscovery.org to learn more about how you can get involved.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

“It was hands-on, relevant, built on the knowledge students had already, was interesting, involved critical thinking/inference.”

“River Basin Days was fun for whole family (not just kids), educational and gets everyone out to the park!”

“The Indigenous knowledge and perspectives was woven into the program seamlessly. I found the concepts touched on were easy for Kindergarten students to grasp and well aligned with the BC First Peoples Principles of Learning.”

Fraser River Discovery Centre
788 Quayside Dr, New Westminster
BC, V3M 6Z6, Canada
604.521.8401
www.fraserriverdiscovery.org