



2024 Impact Report



Our 2024 impact at a glance:



\$1.04M
disbursed



100
grants



\$89K
raised

We're saying so long and thank you

With a deep passion for his community, Richard has been an invaluable asset to the First West Foundation. Since taking on the role of Chair in 2019, after serving alongside co-founding director Peter Podovnikoff since 2015, Richard's leadership, vision, and stewardship have greatly benefited our organization.

An ambassador over the past 11 years, Richard has generously dedicated his time, expertise, and boundless energy to guiding the Board through numerous milestones. Under his leadership, we achieved the largest disbursement rate in our granting history, embraced the transformative approach of trust-based philanthropy, and gained a profound understanding of the power of philanthropy and partnership.

Richard, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your exceptional leadership and for leaving a legacy of compassion and care for the communities we serve. As you embark on your next adventure, we look forward to the exciting new chapters that await.

Thank you, Richard, for leading us with unwavering dedication and for making a lasting impact on our Foundation and the communities we support.

With appreciation, you will be missed.

Susan Byrom
Executive Director



Richard Hill, Board Chair, 2025



About First West Foundation

Through the lens of trust-based philanthropy, First West Foundation invests in the long-term sustainability of its charitable partners. By empowering these organizations, we help them tackle some of the most challenging and complex social issues in our communities. We believe fostering partnerships built on trust and mutual respect, creates a ripple effect that strengthens our communities and ensures everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Our Vision

We help
our communities thrive



A message from our Chair

Our Foundation has embraced the ‘Trust Based Philanthropy’ approach, which has become our cornerstone. We acknowledge the valuable work that charitable organizations do in our community and trust them to continue their efforts with our support, without the burden of a rigorous application and reporting process. Adopting a trust-based approach has brought numerous benefits--it saves time and resources for charities, elevates our relationship with them to a trust-focused level, and opens up dialogue, ensuring their expertise is valued and recognized. We are proud to be an early adopter and leader in this perspective, helping other like-minded groups learn about this progressive approach. The ripple effect of our efforts spreads through our communities, benefiting more people.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated Foundation Team members, Sue-Lynda Bate and Jackey Zellweger, and our Finance Team, Cathy Chaplow, Vivian Chen, Stefka Lukanov, and Ilke Engels. Special thanks to Robert Ruzza, our Advisor to the Finance & Investment Committee, and our hardworking and forward-thinking Executive Director, Susan Byrom, who was recently honored with the King Charles III Coronation Medal, nominated by Food Banks B.C.

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. The employee giving programs are especially inspiring, and the steady support, both financial and in-kind, from First West Credit Union enhances our efficiency and effectiveness. My sincere thanks go out to each person and organization that helps us make a positive difference in people’s lives every day.

On a personal note, after eleven years at the Board table, I will be stepping down at the conclusion of this AGM. I have witnessed tremendous growth and evolution, fueled by the enthusiasm, intelligence, and generosity of many talented and wonderful people. I am excited to see what more will be built upon this very solid Foundation in the future.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our mission.

Warm regards,
Richard

Donors make a difference

First West Team members **empower change every payday** through First West Foundation's payroll giving program. Donating **\$89,635.09** in 2024, donors gave generously to the Foundation's community and named endowments; First West Credit Union's Signature Cause partner food banks with Feed the Valley and The Full Cupboard; and our community partner agencies, BC Children's Hospital Foundation and BC Cancer Foundation.

Donors are also connecting with the Foundation in new ways, helping us review and select grantees through our **SOAR Committee**, the **Envision Financial Employees' Endowment Committee** and our newest, the **Nourish Well Committee**. Welcoming donors and deepening our relationships with them is an amazing opportunity. We're increasing collaboration and at the same, raising awareness about charities leading in our communities.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our donors. Your partnership and generosity is making a difference.

"I am primarily an office worker and am in close proximity to the Foundation Team, **I love listening to the calls** where they provide grants to the community. It is amazing the support we can provide to our community through **a small payroll deduction.**"



Tony Buckingham,
IT Asset & Software Management Analyst

First West Foundation focuses its grantmaking to six Sustainable Development Goals. As a contributing partner in community, aligning with these goals allows the Foundation to **increase its efforts**, have flexibility to grow its presence in identified areas, and **focus its impact**.



\$45,000 was disbursed to **4 organizations** focused on building individual resiliency and **reducing poverty** in communities across BC.



Increasing access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food and reducing **food insecurity** through **9 grants** totaling **\$160,000**.



Increasing a **sense of wellbeing** and access to mental health counselling and services, **\$318,700** supported **27 organizations**.



\$70,500 was granted to advance education programs and services at **8 organizations**.



Through our **SOAR** programs, **15** equity-deserving organizations shared **\$189,294** to support racialized communities and members.



Trust-based philanthropy guides our grantmaking. In 2024, **\$823,494** to **59 organizations** was released through our regional community endowments.

Our impact through the lens of the SDGs



Empowering financial wellbeing

For participants of Launch Okanagan's financial education programs, one-on-one coaching and the innovative Matched Savings Program help make dreams a reality. Focused on improving **financial confidence**, knowledge, and skills among people facing barriers such as low income, high debt, low credit scores, and low assets, the Matched Savings Program provides a 3:1 return (up to \$1,800) for participants who complete the 12-month program. **Grants are committed to life-enhancing goals** like education, a child's RESP, tools for trade workers, or starting a small business. In 2024, Launch helped **over 900** individuals gain control of their financial lives through its 46 programs and **3,405 financial education hours**.

"Launch Okanagan is incredibly grateful for the support of First West Foundation. We understand that when individuals thrive, so do families and our community across generations. Launch's programs improve people's financial confidence, knowledge, and skills so that they can be in control of their finances and feel financially secure, now and in the future." ~Jennifer Robins, Executive Director



Cultivating community through local food

Serving our community since 2012, the **Okanagan Fruit Tree Project Society** has harvested an amazing 475,417 pounds of produce, increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables to more **than 100 schools and social service agencies** across the Central and South Okanagan each year.

Until recently, harvests were food rescue missions working with local families, orchards and farmers. In 2021, they received a gift of a 36 acre working farm in East Kelowna. This one-of-a-kind opportunity was the right fit for a **Keeping a Good Thing Growing** grant. The Foundation's newest endowment, established by First West Credit Union in 2022, focuses on initiatives that enhance an organization's ability to grow its capacity, programs, or services. **A grant of \$17,298** was the final instalment needed by the Society for its new irrigation system. Careful planning is underway to begin growing the vision of a community farming program.



Breaking stigma barriers to better mental health



Stigma-Free Society's Rural Mental Wellness Program, delivered in Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Kitimat, supports people in farming communities and small towns across B.C. To reduce barriers to talking about one's mental health, Stigma-Free created a toolkit, an online resource which includes peer supported videos, articles and activities designed to encourage open discussion.

In 2024, 9,000 rural residents accessed the **Rural Mental Wellness Toolkit**, an increase of **more than 53%** over 2023. A \$15,000 grant from the Envision Financial Community Endowment helped Stigma-Free expand the Toolkit, amplifying more impact, fostering empathy and support for those struggling with their mental health.

"This generous contribution will help foster mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and create a more supportive environment for those in need. We are deeply grateful for First West Foundation's commitment to improving mental wellness in BC's rural areas." ~Andrea Paquette, President



Inspiring lifelong learning

The **Literacy Alliance of the Shuswap Society** is dedicated to ensuring local children improve their reading ability and foster a love of reading in a supportive, relevant, and inclusive learning environment. The **Summer Slide Reading Program** provides additional literacy support and educational opportunities to students who have completed grades 1 to 3. Summer literacy programs address the annual phenomenon of children losing their academic skills over the summer break. Each year, **100 students participate** in the program.

"Thank you so much for supporting our Summer Slide Reading Camp! We are excited to once again help children in Enderby and Armstrong discover a joy of reading while practicing their literacy skills in a fun, safe and inclusive environment." ~Thomas Briginshaw, Executive Director and Literacy Outreach Coordinator



Celebrating Black history



The **BC Black History Awareness Society** works to promote understanding, diversity and inclusion by engaging the whole community on Black contributions to culture, government, sports, and the well-being of society.

Encouraging youth and children to celebrate Black history, was an initiative to expand the scope of the work by facilitating getting free copies of **BC Black History Timeline**, with **128 stories spanning 190 years of Black achievement** and overcoming barriers, into the hands of teachers.

“The Foundation’s support of Black history exhibits, educational material, programs, and activities helps reach both youth and adults, reducing fear and hate and countering anti-Black racism. First West Foundation’s support is a model of community-building for everyone.” ~Paul Schachter, Treasurer



Growing from the inside out

Established in 2015 by First West Credit Union, the **Leaders Fund** focuses on supporting initiatives that **advance capacity building** and development opportunities, including supporting community efforts, education and professional training for leaders and volunteers serving our local charities. Investing in an organization's sustainability is always a good thing. Whether its enhancing board governance, volunteer training, or improving infrastructure and systems to advance service delivery, **these grants have a big impact.**

“Like many not-for-profit organizations, **Seniors Outreach & Resource Centre** has limited capacity to look inwards and focus on how we can improve and expand our services. Over the last few years, we have seen rising costs and increased demands for our social services that help seniors and care partners. It is critical to consider how we can best use our resources to effect positive change for clients and our community.

With a **capacity grant**, our board and staff will have the opportunity to spend time with a skilled coach that brings outside support, perspective, and expertise **to help us define** our intended impacts and **develop strategic clarity** for future services. We feel that establishing strategic clarity – a shared vision among all elements of our organization – can help **unlock our charity's fullest potential.**” ~Ian Gerbrandt, Executive Director



Our community partners

First West Foundation is a federally registered charity and is classified as a private foundation affiliated with First West Credit Union. It was created by the Board and Executive in 1996 to be a perpetual source of funding in support of communities served by First West Credit Union. The Foundation, with assets over \$21.4 million, uses income generated from its 18 endowments to help our communities thrive.

Granting is the cornerstone of the Foundation’s community work, and we continue to evolve our processes through the lens of trust-based philanthropy. Since 1996, the First West Foundation has donated more than \$12.6 million in grants to local community groups and projects. The Foundation grows its endowments through charitable gifts and bequests.

We are proud to invest in the operational needs of our charitable partners with our Impact Grants--unrestricted funds to support their administrative costs, programs and services. Our Capacity Grants--restricted funds-- invest in an organization’s pursuit of education, professional development, training, governance and infrastructure enhancement.

The following charities received a First West Foundation grant in 2024:

Enderby Financial Community Endowment

Serving Enderby & Area F of the North Okanagan Regional District, five grants totaling \$39,444 was disbursed.

Impact Grants

A.L. Fortune Secondary School	\$2,444.00
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada)	\$3,000.00
Kingfisher Interpretive Centre	\$9,000.00
Literacy Alliance Of The Shuswap Society	\$10,000.00
Enderby And District Community Resource Centre	\$15,000.00

Island Savings Community Endowment

In its eighth year of granting, the Island Savings Community Endowment disbursed \$143,000 to 13 charities.

Impact Grants

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada)	\$5,000.00
Operation Freedom Paws Canada	\$5,000.00
BC Black History Awareness Society	\$10,000.00
Human-Nature Counselling	\$10,000.00
Take A Hike Youth At Risk Foundation	\$10,000.00
The Circle Salt Spring Island	\$10,000.00
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre For Immigrants and Refugees	\$13,000.00
Ladysmith Family And Friends	\$15,000.00
Nanaimo Community Kitchens Society	\$15,000.00
Nanaimo Men’s Resource Centre	\$15,000.00
Salt Spring Island Farmland Trust	\$15,000.00

Capacity Grants

Greater Victoria Citizens Counselling Centre	\$10,000.00
Victoria Brain Injury Society	\$10,000.00

Envision Financial Community Endowment

The founding endowment of the Foundation, \$477,850 was released to 30 charities in 2024.

Impact Grants

Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre Association	\$2,500.00
Stroke Recovery Association of BC	\$3,000.00
Barrowtown Elementary School	\$5,000.00
Chilliwack Restorative Justice Youth Advocacy Association	\$5,000.00
Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD Canada)	\$5,000.00
Qmunity BCs Queer Trans Two Spirit Resource Centre	\$5,000.00
Langley Community Services Society	\$8,850.00
Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland	\$10,000.00
Stigma Free Society	\$15,000.00
BeMorr Society Mental Health And Suicide Awareness Society	\$20,000.00
Care For Women Foundation	\$20,000.00
Food For The Soul Project	\$20,000.00
MOSIAC	\$20,000.00
BC Agriculture In The Classroom Foundation	\$25,000.00
Delta Hospital And Community Foundation	\$25,000.00
Emotions Health And Wellness Society of B.C	\$25,000.00
Langley Meals On Wheels	\$25,000.00
M2W2 Association	\$25,000.00
Phoenix Society	\$25,000.00
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society	\$25,000.00
Sher Vancouver LGBTQ Friends Society	\$25,000.00
Step Forward Health Society	\$25,000.00
Surrey/North Delta Meals On Wheels	\$25,000.00
Take A Hike Youth At Risk Foundation	\$25,000.00
The Great Commission Foundation	\$25,000.00

Capacity Grants

Elder College Delta Society	\$3,500.00
Mission Hospice Society	\$5,000.00
Kitimat 50 Society Centre	\$10,000.00
Mackie's Place Youth Social House Society	\$10,000.00
WestCoast Kids Cancer Foundation	\$10,000.00

Envision Financial Employees Endowment

Grown from donations collected through the Jeans Day program in the Envision Financial region, the Envision Financial Employees Endowment provides grants to charities nominated and selected by Envision Financial team members. In 2024, \$15,934 was disbursed to eight recipients.

Amici Curiae Friendship Society	\$1,000.00
Cyrus Centre	\$1,434.00
Volunteer Cancer Drivers	\$1,500.00
Guru Nanak Food Bank	\$2,000.00
Storehouse Community Hub Society	\$2,000.00
Fraser River Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association	\$2,500.00
Raphael Family Support Foundation	\$2,500.00
Tamitik Status of Women	\$3,000.00

Valley First Community Endowment

Supporting the Okanagan, Similkameen and Thompson valleys since 2011, the Valley First Community Endowment disbursed \$163,200 to 16 charities.

Impact Grants

Desert Valley Hospice Society	\$2,500.00
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada)	\$5,000.00
The Bridge Youth and Family Services	\$7,500.00
The Centre For Epilepsy And Seizure Education In BC	\$9,700.00
Niteo Africa Society	\$10,000.00
OCCA	\$10,000.00
Penticton Community Soupateria Society	\$10,000.00
Project Literacy Central Okanagan Society	\$10,000.00
Take A Hike Youth At Risk Foundation	\$10,000.00
Third Space Charity	\$12,000.00
Impact Toolbox	\$12,500.00
Kelowna Community Resources Society	\$15,000.00
Launch Financial Education Society	\$15,000.00
South Okanagan Similkameen Volunteer Centre Society	\$15,000.00

Capacity Grants

Ozanam Recovery House	\$9,000.00
Seniors Outreach Services Society	\$10,000.00

Keeping a Good Thing Growing

We believe to help communities thrive we need to invest in our charities and their future goals. Keeping a Good Thing Growing focuses on supporting initiatives that enhance an organization’s ability to grow its capacity, programs or services. Three grants were released in 2024 totaling \$47,298.

Abbotsford Hospice Grief Support Society	\$15,000.00
Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group Society	\$15,000.00
Okanagan Fruit Tree Project Society	\$17,298.00

First West Credit Union Leaders Fund

Established in 2015, the Leaders Fund provides much needed grants for organizational capacity and professional development programs and projects. In 2024, the Fund granted \$39,400 to eight charities.

First Nations Technology Council	\$850.00
Niteo Africa Society	\$850.00
Odihi	\$850.00
Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society	\$850.00
Heritage Abbotsford Society	\$6,000.00
Home Is Where We Live-Life Cycles Project Society	\$10,000.00
Okanagan Fruit Tree Project	\$10,000.00
Peachland Wellness Centre Peachland	\$10,000.00

SOAR Grants

SOAR launched in 2023 to support equity-deserving organizations committed to serving racialized groups, including and not limited to people who identify as Black, Brown, Indigenous and/or as a person of colour in communities served by First West Credit Union. We’re grateful for the time and expertise shared by our SOAR Committee for their help in reviewing and selecting our 2024 SOAR recipients. SOAR Committee members join the Foundation from First West’s seven Employee Network Groups.

\$189,294 was disbursed to 15 charities. All grants are provided by the respective community endowments.



Enderby Financial Community Endowment

A.L. Fortune Secondary School \$2,444.00

Island Savings Community Endowment

BC Black History Awareness Society \$10,000.00
Human-Nature Counselling \$10,000.00
Vancouver Island Counselling Centre For Immigrants \$13,000.00

Valley First Community Endowment

Niteo Africa Society \$10,000.00
OCCA \$10,000.00
Impact Toolbox \$12,500.00

Envision Financial Community Endowment

Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre Association \$2,500.00
Qmunity BCs Queer Trans Two Spirit Resource Centre \$5,000.00
Langley Community Services Society \$8,850.00
Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland \$10,000.00
MOSIAC \$20,000.00
Sher Vancouver LGBTQ Friends Society \$25,000.00
The Great Commisison Foundation \$25,000.00
Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society \$25,000.00

Named Endowment Fund Disbursements

First West Foundation is proud to help our members achieve their philanthropic goals and establish a legacy of giving to a charity of their choice. The Foundation’s Named Endowments benefit the following charities:

Frank Jamieson Memorial					
High School Curling Bursary Fund	Chilliwack Curling Club	\$400.00	Haukeland Family Legacy Fund	Lupus Society, MS Society, Watoto	\$2,266.00
Mark Warawa Legacy Fund	Langley Environmental Partners Society	\$523.00	Dewar Family Legacy Fund	Movember Canada, Victoria Hospitals Foundation	\$2,728.00
Sally O'Sullivan Legacy Fund	SideByside Children's Village	\$925.00	Anonymous Fund	Registered Nurses Foundation of B.C.	\$4,729.00
Ben H. Voth Legacy Fund	Construction Foundation of BC	\$1,272.00	SideBySide Children's Village	Youth programs	\$7,037.00
Gord & Enrica Huston Fund	BC Cancer Foundation	\$1,660.00	Peter Bell Legacy Fund	Seniors’ programming in Enderby	\$20,959.00

Flow through grants

First West team members give generously each year through payroll deduction to First West Foundation’s community and named endowments and the following selected partners, including First West’s signature cause food bank partners, BC Cancer Foundation and BC Children’s Hospital Foundation. In 2024, our donor community raised \$89,635.09.

Whitevalley Community Resource Centre	\$75.00	Chemainus Food Bank	\$702.00
Peachland Food Bank	\$78.00	United Way Southern Vancouver Island	\$710.00
Ladysmith Food Bank	\$78.00	Friends in Need Food Bank	\$884.00
CMS Food Bank Society	\$117.00	United Way BC	\$1,016.00
Feed Enderby & District Food Bank	\$130.00	Kamloops Food Bank	\$1,122.00
Lake Cowichan Food Bank	\$156.00	SHARE Family & Community Services	\$1,248.00
Hope Food Bank	\$234.00	Okanagan Armstrong Food Bank	\$1,390.00
Saanich Peninsula Lions Food Bank	\$234.00	Sources South Surrey/White Rock Food Bank	\$1,872.00
Lumby Food Bank Society	\$251.00	St. Joseph’s Food Bank (Mission)	\$1,872.00
Sooke Food Bank Society	\$294.00	Abbotsford Food Bank	\$1,976.00
Salvation Army Vernon Food Bank	\$336.00	Victoria Mustard Seed Food Bank	\$2,008.00
Salvation Army Cawston/Keremeos Food Bank	\$394.00	South Delta Food Bank	\$2,137.00
Fraser Valley Gleaners	\$416.00	Sources Langley Food Bank	\$2,138.00
Princeton Food Bank	\$428.00	Cowichan Valley Basket Society	\$2,162.00
Goldstream Food Bank	\$461.00	Surrey Food Bank	\$2,708.00
Oliver Food Bank	\$468.00	A Better Life Foundation	\$3,000.00
Salt Spring Island Food Bank	\$546.00	Salvation Army Chilliwack Community Food Bank	\$3,001.00
SOS Children's Village BC	\$572.00	Central Okanagan Food Bank	\$3,966.00
Kitimat Food Bank	\$594.00	BC Cancer Foundation	\$4,015.23
Tillicum Adult Learning Centre – Hope	\$626.00	Salvation Army Penticton Food Bank	\$6,145.00
Nanaimo Loaves & Fishes Food Bank	\$675.00	BC Children's Hospital Foundation	\$16,356.21

We couldn't have done it without your generous support!


Thank you to our donors and community partners.


As part of its annual community investment, First West Credit Union provides the Foundation with an annual donation, a portion of which covers the Foundation's operational costs, ensuring 100% of all donations has charitable impact.

First West Foundation is grateful every day for the privilege of working and serving its communities on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territory of Coast Salish peoples, specifically the S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Nuxwsa'7aq (Nooksack), Kwantlen, šxʷməθkʷəy̓əmaʔɬ təməxʷ (Musqueam), Stz'uminus, sqəci'yaʔɬ təməxʷ (Katzie), Nl̓əʔkepmx Tmíxʷ (Nlaka'pamux), Semiahmoo, scəwaθenaʔɬ təməxʷ (Tsawwassen), Á,LENENEÇ ŁTE (W̱SÁNEĆ) and ɣà 'isla w̱ áwís (Haisla).



Let's stay in touch

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“I want to thank you **for being a leader in the field of philanthropy** and taking such a progressive approach to grant-making. You are so thoughtful in your approach and are really **putting the needs of charities and the success of their programs first**. I am so grateful to see this, and I know it is allowing your funding to make an even bigger impact in the community because you are taking into consideration the time and capacity of charitable organizations. THANK YOU!” ~Caitlin McBride, West Coast Kids Cancer Foundation