

Preparing for a Warm Welcome



 **Brent Sparrow (Musqueam)** uses knowledge passed down from Musqueam Elders to help inspire his art.



 **Floyd Joseph (Squamish Nation)** intends to welcome DTES community members with his house post to ensure that no one is forgotten in the Squamish territory.



 **Jonas Jones (Tsleil-Waututh with strong bloodlines from Squamish Nation)** is honoured to represent his ancestral stories and culture through his art.

We've been anticipating the completion of our new building for years and it's starting to feel more real with each new element that goes up! By early 2026, construction will complete and we expect occupancy will happen in the spring.

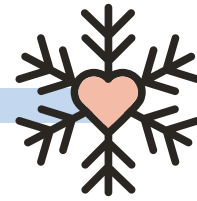
When our new building is ready for the Downtown Eastside community, residents and visitors will be welcomed by three house posts at the entrance. Each are carved by host nation artists representing the host nation lands: *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish) and *səl̓ilwətaɬ* (Tsleil-Waututh).

Brent Sparrow belongs to the *Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam) First Nation. Growing up, he started as a welder before pursuing his passion for art. In 2006, he began apprenticing alongside his mother Susan A. Point and the late master carver John Livingston. He began showing his awareness and knowledge of his traditional interests in Coast Salish Art as he started working with his own talented mother. Sparrow reveals that he uses his knowledge passed down by *Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam) Elders to encourage his inspiration for art pieces. From traditional medicines, teachings and legendary stories he bases his art off of these specific characteristics.

Floyd Joseph is a *Siyám* and Hereditary Chief of the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish Nation). He was trained culturally as a Hereditary Chief which informed his artistic practice that he started at the age of seven to provide for his family. Floyd shared that he wants "to put a welcome figure in our territory in the DTES because our brothers and sisters need to be held up and deserve our medicine too. No one is forgotten in my territory. He who stands on the mountain and looks over the people as far as the eye can see means everyone. No one is left out from that love."

Jonas Jones comes from the village of *Átsnach* (Tsleil-Waututh) with strong bloodlines running from *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish Nation). He is honoured to be practicing this craft, as this foundation of art and way of life has been running through his blood for thousands of years. Jonas says: "Our art represents who we are, where we come from, the ancestors who were here before us, and the people that are still here today. At one point in time, our way of life was near extinction due to colonization. And the stories being told left out the genocide and wrongful taking of our territories."

Christmas is Almost Here



Dear Friends,

Another Christmas season is approaching and this one feels different. It will be the last one before we move into our new building. With the first week of Advent coming up, I've been reflecting on the theme of "hope" and all that we are hopefully anticipating in the new year.

We've been hard at work preparing for this move, which we expect will happen in the first half of 2026. Once we're in our new home we'll have expanded space to serve even more Downtown Eastside community members, along with residents of the building, and provide a place where our neighbours can experience dignity, belonging and justice.

In our new space, we'll have more volunteer opportunities

for folks who want to join us to help serve our neighbours. Our building will feature a café for community members to stop by and enjoy coffee, sandwiches, and snacks. We're excited to welcome back Communities of Faith to take on this dedicated volunteer role, serving the community and fostering a warm and safe environment.



This is all part of making our vision a reality, a neighbourhood where we can celebrate every person's worth and all people can thrive. We know we can't do it alone. We do it with supporters like you alongside us, joining together to uplift the neighbourhood.

This season, as we light the first candle of Advent, may we carry that light of hope into the new year for our neighbours and for a city where everyone is seen and cared for.

From all of us at FIRST UNITED, have a merry Christmas and happy holidays!

Amanda Burrows,
Executive Director

Don't Hide Homelessness, Prioritize Long-term Solutions

The 2026 FIFA World Cup takes place next summer and with Vancouver set to be one of the host cities, residents and organizations in the Downtown Eastside are concerned about how preparations for the event will impact the community.

FIFA requires host city "beautification" and while the Vancouver FIFA World Cup Host committee has stated that it doesn't plan to displace people experiencing homelessness, at the time of writing, the City hasn't outlined a plan for how they'll address visible homelessness and poverty.

Our concern is that, like before the 2010 Winter Olympics, the City may respond to visible poverty with street sweeps, bylaw crackdowns and displacement rather than compassion and real solutions. During that time, FIRST UNITED became an emergency shelter as

part of efforts to clear unsheltered neighbours from public spaces.



We remember packing up to 300 community members into the pews and on the floors of our old church building. While we were happy to provide shelter and food, our '60s church building wasn't an adequate shelter space, nor was it a long-term solution to homelessness.

We urge the City and FIFA organizers to prioritize real solutions like affordable and supportive housing instead of just hiding homelessness temporarily and causing more harm in the long-term. Stay connected with us as we follow along with developments and take action to ensure DTES residents aren't hidden.

Advancing Solutions to the Housing Crisis



In British Columbia, 1.6 million renters bear the brunt of the housing crisis and eviction and displacement are urgent issues. Data from our BC Eviction Mapping project shows that evictions lead to homelessness and displacement at alarming rates: 25% result in homelessness, 79% for community displacement.

That's why we created a second law reform platform, *Inclusion, Fairness, and Stability: Working Toward the Right to Housing in BC*, with solutions to improve tenants' rights and access to justice. We provide solutions that have been proven to work in other jurisdictions and outline how and why they would improve the housing crisis here.

This platform builds on our first law reform platform *Everyone Needs a Home: Solutions for preventing homelessness, evictions, and displacement*, released in early 2024, and was created with updated data from our ongoing BC Eviction Mapping project.

Our latest platform focuses on three areas where changes need to be made urgently to prevent homelessness from eviction:

- 1. Protecting Diversity and Inclusion**
 - a. Prohibiting pet bans in rentals
 - b. Confirming tenants' right to install cooling equipment (air conditioners) and prohibiting clauses that restrict the use of cooling devices
- 2. Procedural Fairness at the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB)**
 - a. Requiring landlords to apply to evict a tenant
 - b. Requiring landlords to provide evidence first when evicting a tenant, and providing tenants reason able time to respond to evidence
 - c. Ensuring that adjournments will be provided to allow tenants appropriate time to review and respond to landlords' evidence
- 3. Rent Stabilization using "rent pressure zones" to stabilize rent costs.**
 - a. Replacing unlimited rent increases between tenancies with selective vacancy control between tenancies in times of low vacancy



Our goals are to improve conditions for renters in BC, to reduce evictions and prevent homelessness.

Following the release of our first platform last year, the BC Government passed Bill 14 in spring 2024, which amended the *Residential Tenancy Act* and addressed several of the issues in our platform, including requiring landlords to use the new web portal to create Notices to End Tenancy for personal occupancy. Updated data from our eviction mapping project suggests that this has already helped reduce bad-faith landlord's use evictions.



There is more that needs to be done to fix the housing crisis. Read the full platform to learn more at firstunited.ca/how-we-help/law-reform.



FIRST UNITED

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*Located on unceded Xʷməθkʷəy̓əm
(Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),
& Səlílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) lands.*



Volunteer Program

Our new volunteer program is launching in early 2026 and will coincide with the opening of our new building. With a larger space and new and expanded programs, we anticipate a greater need for volunteers as we expect to serve even more Downtown Eastside community members. If you're interested in helping out with programs like footcare, meals, taxes and more, visit firstunited.ca/volunteer.



Winter In-Kind Donations

We're in need of winter essentials to keep DTES community members safe and warm as we anticipate harsher temperatures. We're accepting in-kind donations of jackets, sweaters, scarves, toques, socks, and more. Visit the "Gifts In-Kind" page under the "How You Help" section of firstunited.ca for a list of needed items and drop-off instructions.



Sixth Annual Shelter Gala

We're hosting our sixth annual GivingTuesday Shelter Gala on December 2. As we do every year, we'll host a gala for FIRST UNITED shelter residents who will be treated to a luxury three-course meal. We'll also provide over 250 gourmet meals to the DTES community from our food truck. Learn more about how you can support at firstunited.ca/events.



firstunited.ca