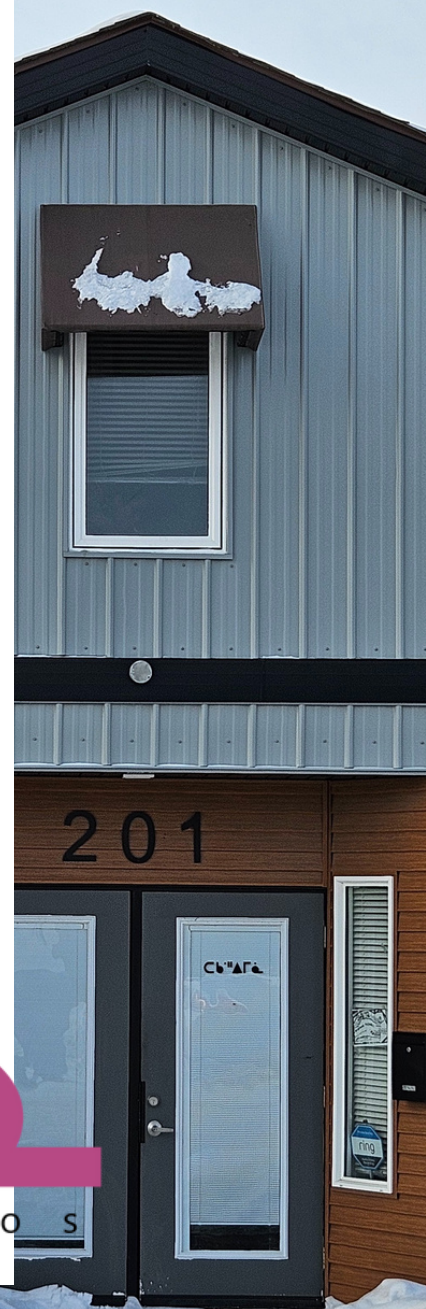


DECEMBER 2024

AGM report

Chokecherry Studios Inc.



ABOUT CHOKECHERRY STUDIOS

Chokecherry Studios resides on treaty 6 territory, the ancestral homeland of many Indigenous Nations such as the Cree, Nakota, Dakota, Saulteaux, and the Metis. Chokecherry is a youth-led organization that first incorporated in 2019, where 30 youth attended the old space on Ave K south in the first year. Since then, it has grown exponentially as a need for a youth safe haven is seen as a community need within Saskatoon core neighborhoods. We offer programming and a chance to learn life alternatives through art and culture. We also offer community resources and support.

OUR MISSION, VISION, VALUES AND COMMITMENTS

Provide youth with access to inclusive art and cultural programs, enabling them to creatively tell their stories and mobilize their communities.

Founded and led by youth. Art centered and justice-seeking. Creative action orientated.

Art, community and restorative justice.

Our commitment are the foundation of our identity and actions. They guide how we interact with the world around us, shape our projects, and define our relationships within and outside our community.



Letter from Executive Director

Tansi,

My name is Justice Noon, I was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and am proud to identify as a member of Thunderchild First Nations, located on Treaty 6 territory. Currently, I have the privilege of serving as the Executive Director of Chokecherry Studios Inc. While my time in this role has been short, it has already proven to be a profound journey of growth. The past three months have been a learning curve, one that challenges not only what I believe but also how I act and embody those beliefs in real, mindful ways.

With this responsibility, I have inherited several projects, histories, and the relations of a community that is both rich and complex. I strive to approach each of these with an open mind, allowing the teachings of our ancestors and the wisdom of my community to guide me as I learn the intricacies of Chokecherry Studios. Chokecherry is at a pivotal moment, an opportunity to enter a new phase of growth and development. With the right guiding principles, mentors, and resources, I firmly believe that my team and I can help this space blossom into the next era, one that reflects both our collective past and our shared future.

When I first joined Chokecherry, I came with my own ideas of what the organization should be. However, as I continue to engage with the space, its potential and its true purpose are unfolding in front of me, in ways that I never expected. This is a lesson in humility—one that reminds me of the wisdom that comes from listening deeply to the needs of the space, the land, and the people we serve.

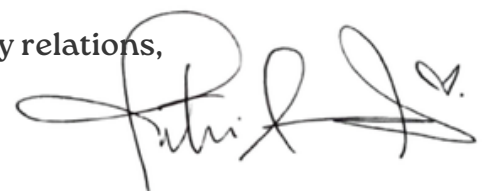
Saskatoon, like many cities, is grappling with significant challenges, including homelessness and the rising crisis of opioid use. It can often feel overwhelming to watch as our community faces such adversity. Our youth, in particular, are dealing with new and complex struggles—ranging from substance use to violence, homelessness, and even the pressures of navigating social media. At Chokecherry, we are committed to providing a safe space where youth can explore alternative possibilities for their lives. It is not to suggest that all youth are struggling, but rather, it is rooted in the Indigenous principle of kinship—that we must care for one another and create spaces where healing, growth, and connection can thrive.

I believe that when we understand both our gifts and our limitations, we can move toward truly helping others. This is where personal power begins—not in dominance, but in the ability to step into our gifts, to uplift others, and to engage in service to our community. And what better place to begin this journey than with the youth—the future of our community?

In the year ahead, I hope that Chokecherry Studios can offer Saskatoon a deeper understanding of what community means through an Indigenous youth-led perspective. I envision a future where we, as both staff and board members, are united in organizing our efforts and securing the sustainable operational means necessary to make our shared vision a reality. Together, we can foster a space where every individual has the opportunity to explore their potential and contribute to the greater whole.

Thank you for your time, your support, and your commitment to this journey with us.

In all my relations,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justice Noon', with a small heart symbol at the end of the signature.

Justice Noon
Executive Director

HOW IS CHOKECHERRY ORGANIZED?



C o m m u n i t y

In Cree society, youth have always been placed at the center — they are the heart of the community and carry its future. They are closely surrounded by knowledge keepers and elders, who guide them and pass down cultural teachings to prepare them for the path ahead. Adults form the next circle, supporting both youth and elders, and knowledge keepers by carrying out the daily responsibilities that keep the community strong and functioning. Encompassing all these layers is the warrior society, who act as protectors of the people and step into roles of support and service — the *oskapêwisak* — during times of peace. This framework has guided how we've woven the roles of the Chokecherry board, staff, mentors, ceremonialists, elders, artists, and youth into our model, reflecting traditional Indigenous structures and the teachings of the sacred medicines.

Youth represent Sweetgrass — the sacred braid of mind, body, and spirit — symbolizing unity, kindness, and growth. Like sweetgrass, youth are woven into the future of our people, held in sacred regard, nurtured and protected by every circle around them.

Mentors, Artists, Cultural Workers, and Ceremonialists embody Sage, bringing wisdom, clarity, and healing. Their role is to guide youth through teachings, art, ceremony, and lived example — clearing the path for youth with care and insight.

Staff are the Cedar, grounding and protective. They are the guardians of space — ensuring safety, upholding traditions, creating environments where all feel rooted and held. Their work supports both the practical and spiritual wellbeing of the community.

Board Members carry Tobacco, the medicine of respect, communication, and governance. They uphold our sacred responsibilities to one another and to the future, ensuring decisions are made in good relations and with the guidance of spirit and community voice.

OUR PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

We have 5 main programming offered at Chokecherry Studios

Nisakihison



Nisakihison, which translates to "I love myself" in Plains Cree, is our suicide prevention and life promotion program. Nisakihison aims decrease stigma around suicide and mental illness through arts-based programming, educational workshops, and access to free, in-house counselling with certified therapists.



Community is Harm Reduction



Community is Harm Reduction (CIHR) takes place every Thursday, offering valuable programming that empowers individuals with practical life skills. By providing access to essential resources and promoting sexual health through monthly testing (in partnership with SaskHealth), CIHR works to normalize these important aspects of well-being. When stigma is reduced and community support is fostered, these services become more accessible to everyone. Harm Reduction fosters a compassionate and mindful approach, making it easier for individuals to access the information and resources they need to thrive.

Youth Advisory Council aka 'lil chiefs'

Youth Advisory Council (YAC), aka lil chiefs, offers programming where youth can learn to find and use their voices in community matters that affect them. It is also a time and space where youth who are currently cultivating their voices are given a platform, which in turn, causes a ripple effect with their peers. Lil Chiefs will also focus on teachings that promotes healthy leadership and community repsonsiblity. It is offered every Tuesday.

nistes - boys Group



nistes is the boys program that is offered every second Monday, with an emphasis of culture taught through mentors. nistes hopes to reintroduce and emphasis oskâpêwis teachings, healthy masculinities and kinship through a present day context.



nimis - girls group

nimis is the girls group and is offered every other Monday. nimis focuses on topics that affect indigenous girls today, guided by the concepts of feminist intersectionalism. Using artistic expression, the girls can experience a safe space to discuss conversations and create pieces, that empower their well beings.

Drop in Program

Drop in is offered every day that Chokecherry is open, it compliments the parallel on-going programming that also occurs every evening. Drop in encourages youth to embrace the opportunity to create art, channeling their energy into something meaningful. Drop In also provides essential support for vulnerable youth, and many have shared that they appreciate the opportunity to engage with culture while in the space.



Other programming Highlights

October saw the staff oreoare and serve a Turkey Dinner to start off their weekend. This was a chance for the new staff to get to know the youth better as we had over 40 youth stop in for dinner!

In November, we had Randy Morin stop in to tell Indigenous Ghost Stories for our Halloween party where the center was decorated (pictured on the right)

Mid November Northstar, and his brother and father came into Chokecherry to perform a pipe ceremony to put good intention into programming and into the building. 2 youth, and 2 staff received their native name that evening.



The continuation of the relation between Paved Arts and Chokecherry continues with the Mic Drop series.

End of November, the organization Str8 Up came in to do a presentation on their organization and program. Potential partnership in programming, where members can work with youth as relatable guidance, may occur in the new year!





Chokecherry serving turkey dinner



Staff with members of Str8 UP



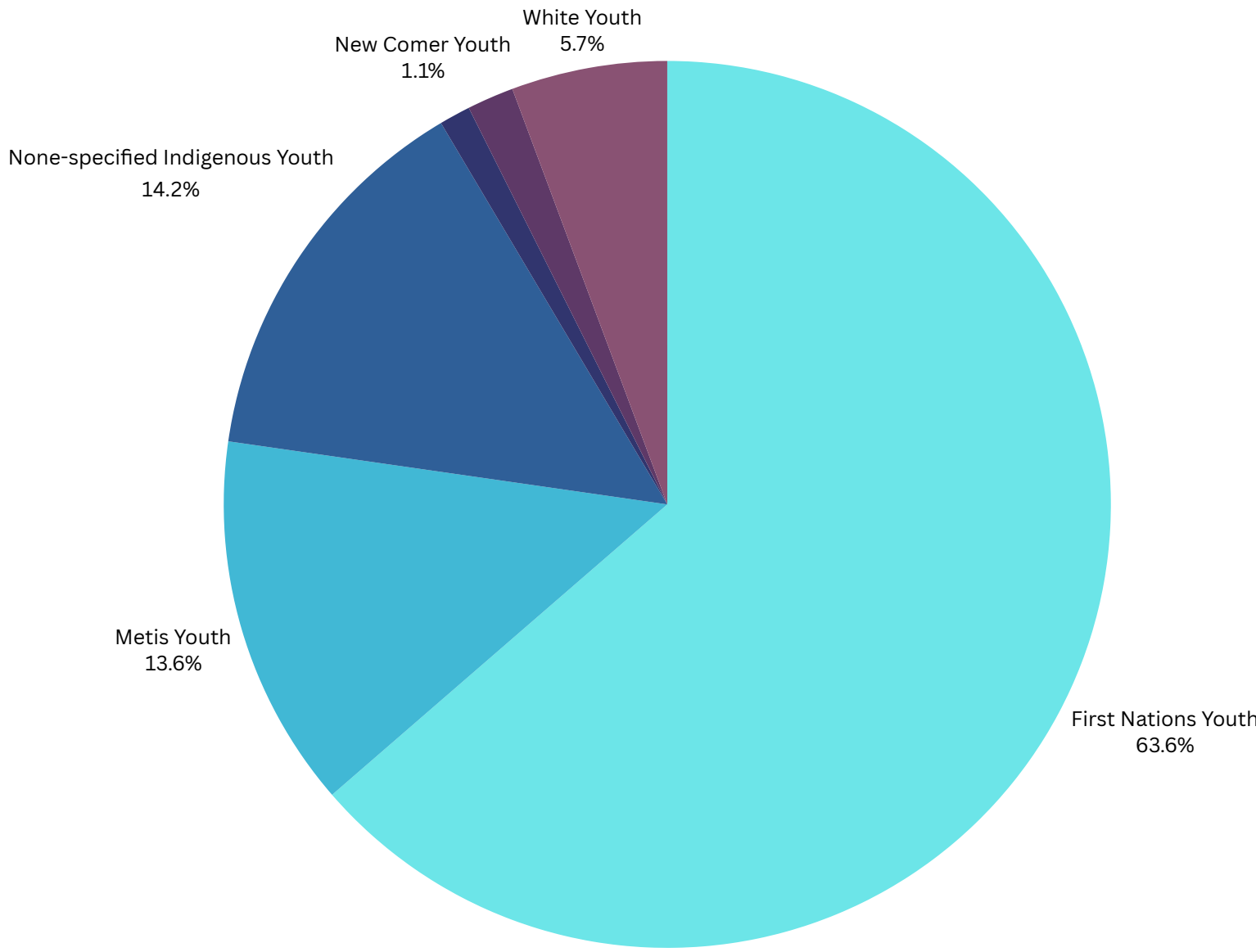
“Change is Hard” nisakihison workshop where youth, staff and board members engaged with one another to talk about the meaning of change, and the recent changes at Chokecherry



Staff and a youth went to the Kids' Help Line National Conference in Toronto to speak on a panel about youth access support resources

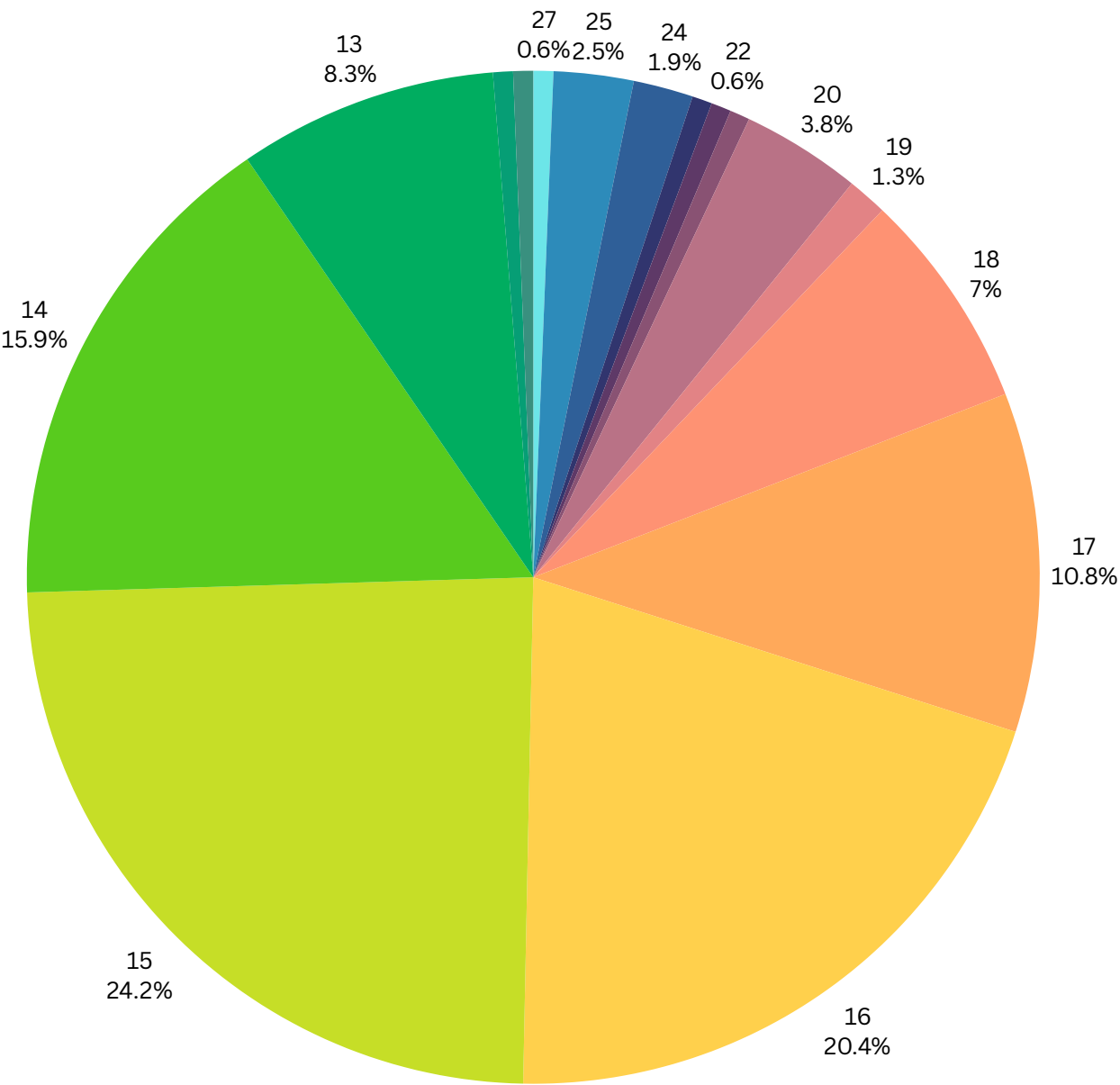
Demographics

YOUTH STATS 2024- RACE



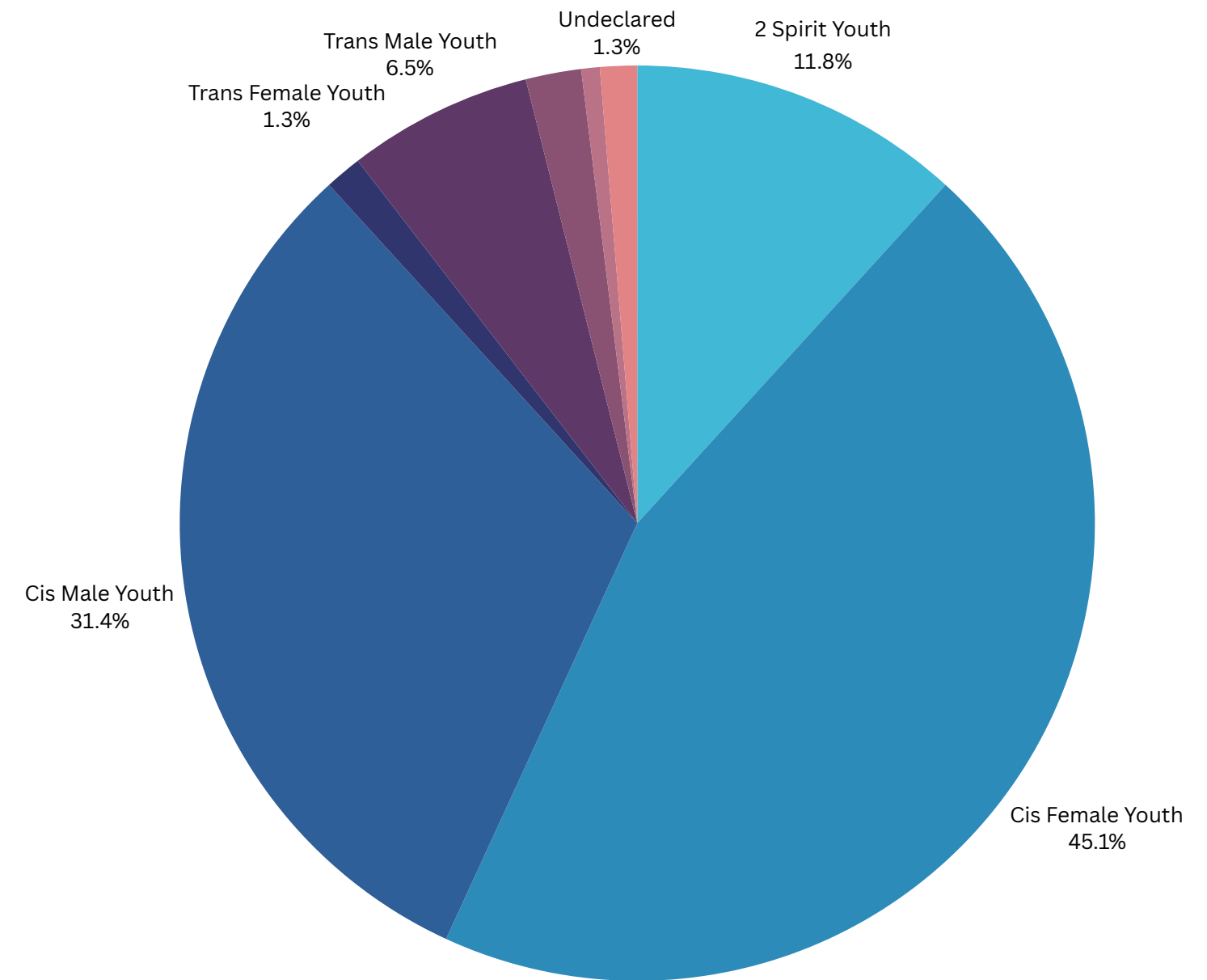
Demographics

YOUTH STATS 2024 - AGES

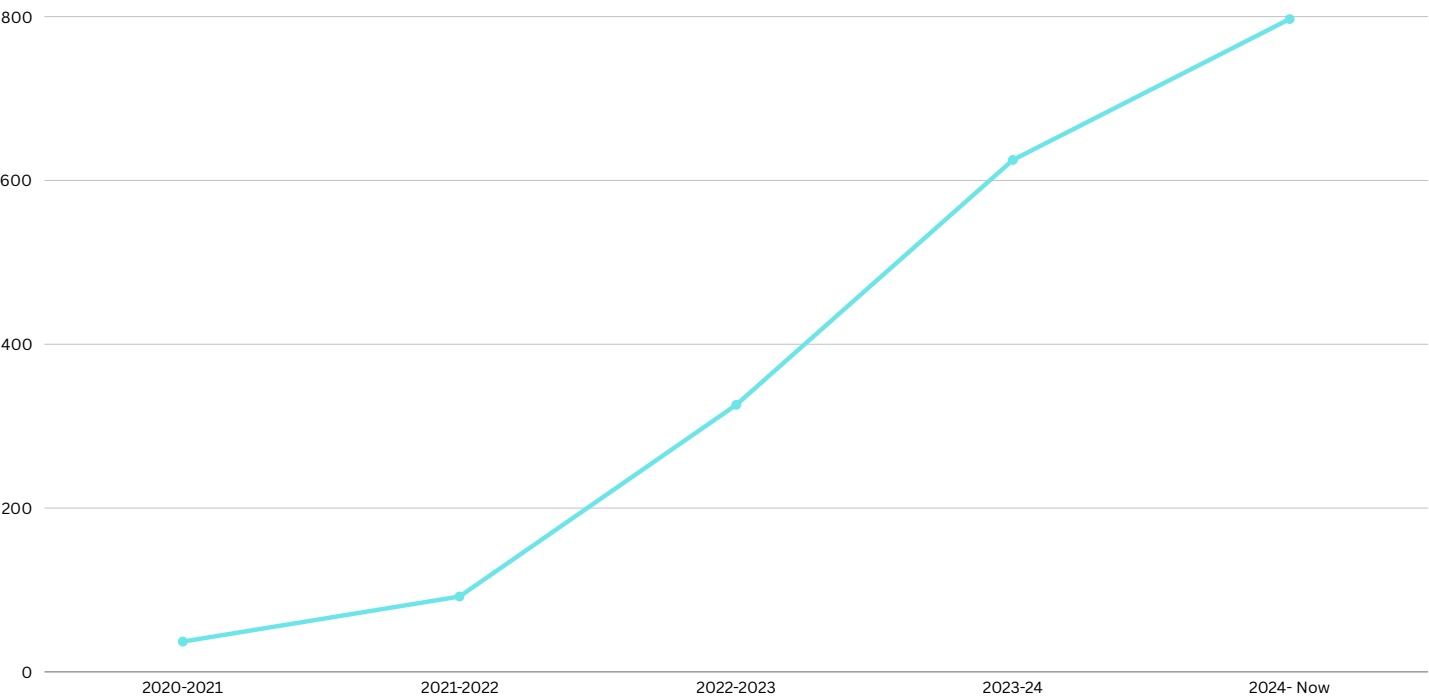


Demographics

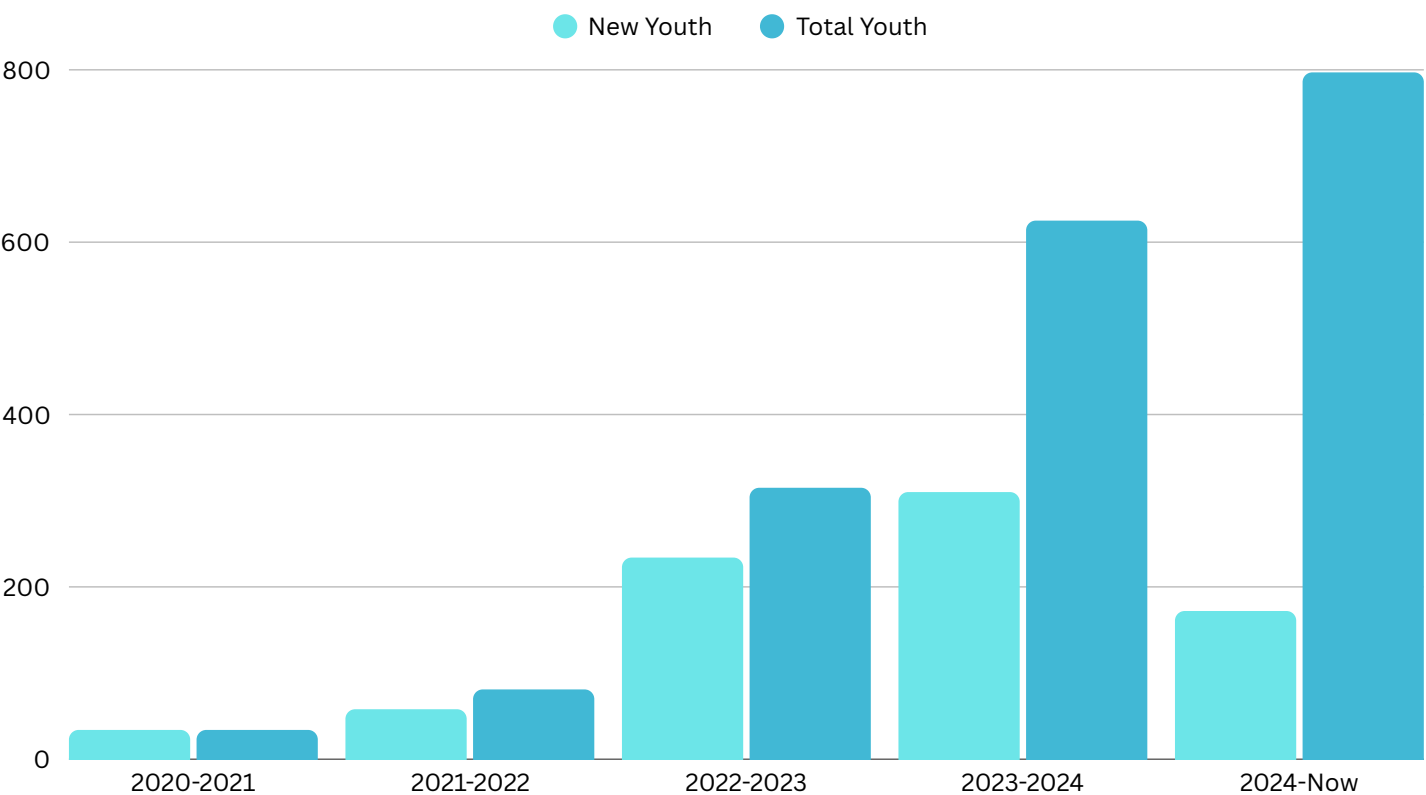
YOUTH STATS 2024 - GENDER IDENTITIES



Demographics



YOUTH STATS 2024 GROWTH



Our Team

*Meet the dedicated team members of Chokecherry Studios
via Nov2024*



Left to right: Nikki B. (SIIT practicum student), Sonya/Billy Clinton (nistes coordinator), Alex Stevens (drop in supervisor), Allison Forsberg (nikakihison coordinator), Skylar Forsberg (Youth Advisory coordinator), Craig C (SIIT practicum student), Connor Rodriguez (Community is Harm Reduction coordinator), Tristen Clarke (nimis coordinator), Larissa D (SIIT practicum student), Angela T. (SIIT practicum student), and Justice Noon (Executive Director).



Our next AGM is October 2025, thank you for your continued support!