

Governance

Children. Culture. Community.

Purpose

It is the purpose of Kw'umut Lelum's Board of Directors to govern the agency, driven by our Member Nation's need and aspirations and rooted in our sacred Snuw'uyulh. We hold an unwavering commitment to the values of honouring Indigenous natural laws and ways of being, inclusiveness, independence and innovation. Above everything, we work as one heart, one mind to ensure that every child has a childhood.

Objectives

- > Operate under a Member Nation-driven governance and village of care model focused on prevention and rooted in our Snuw'uyulh.
- > In partnership with our Member Nations, ensure that our children prosper in their childhood; work as one heart, one mind to keep our children safe and living within their family and kinship system.
- > Maximize available funding to meet the desired outcomes and aspirations of the Member Nations.
- > Continue to innovate, expand programming into prevention service and secure additional funding sources through independence.

Principles

- > Our Member Nations guide, drive, and direct the way we take care of our children, families and communities
- > Family, community and culture are essential to our children's health and well-being, and our children are essential to the health and well-being of our communities.
- > Our children's well-being is the most important consideration in our decisions; a child's job is to eat, sleep, play.
- > Safety and well-being of our children is maintained using the most collaborative, culturally appropriate, family-inclusive decision-making.
- > Maintaining best practices congruent with each respective Member Nation.
- > We honour natural Indigenous laws
- > One heart, one mind, rooted in snuw'uyulh

Member Nations



Halalt First Nation

Chief James (Bert) Thomas
7973 Chemainus Road
Chemainus, BC V0R 1K5
Phone: (250) 246-4736



Lyackson First Nation

Chief Richard Thomas
7973A Chemainus Road
Chemainus, BC V0R 1K5
Phone: (250) 246-5019



Málexeł Nation (Malahat)

Chief George Harry Jr.
110 Thunder Rd,
Mill Bay, BC V0R 2P0
Phone: (250) 743-3231



Penelakut Tribe

Chief Joan Brown
PO Box 360
Chemainus, BC V0R 1K0
Phone (250) 246-2321



Ts'uubaa'asatx (Lake Cowichan)

Chief Georgina Livingstone
313B Deer Road, PO Box 159
Lake Cowichan, BC V0R 1K0
Phone: (250) 749-3301



Qualicum First Nation

Chief Michael Recalma
5850 River Road
Qualicum Beach, BC V9K 1Z5
Phone: (250) 757-9337



Snaw-Naw-As First Nation (Nanoose)

Chief Gordon Edwards
209 Mallard Way
Lantzville, BC V0R 2H0
Phone: (250) 390-3661



Snuneymuxw First Nation

Chief Michael Wyse
668 Centre St
Nanaimo, BC V9R 4Z4
Phone: (250) 740-2300



Stz' uminus First Nation (Chemainus)

Chief Roxanne Harris
12611B Trans Canada Hwy,
Ladysmith, BC V9G 1M5
(250) 245-7155

Message from the President



'Ahh siiem nu siiye'yu
'eethu Qwul'sih'yah'maht
tun'i tsun 'utl Leey'qsun,
'i' Snuy'ney'muxw, 'i' Sto:lo

Good day respected people. My name is Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Thomas) and I am a member of Lyackson First Nation. I also have Snuneymuxw roots through my late mother Doris Josephson (nee Prest) and my late grandmother Lavina Prest (nee Wyse) and Sto:lo roots through my late grandfather Charles Prest.

It is an honour to be a member of the Kw'umut Lelum Board of Directors. Every year I begin by expressing how exciting it is to pause and reflect on the previous year, but last year might be the most unusual. We were in the COVID-19 pandemic for the entire year. KL staff needed to function as a team, but mostly they were working alone and often remotely. The Board watched the staff tackle this challenge and not only continue to offer exceptional support, but flourish. KL remained undeniably committed to offering the best level of service possible to all of our nine Member Nations' children and families, while at the same time ensuring we kept everyone's health and safety front and center.

The Board wants to acknowledge the outstanding leadership demonstrated by all KL employees and thank them for their exceptional management of COVID-19 and the myriad of changes this brought to each and every one. The Elders remind us to always work together and support each other - Ts'its'uwatul' tseep. We know this teaching is what allowed KL to successfully manage the COVID-19 pandemic and not let it interfere with the safety and wellbeing of the nine Member Nations' children and families. The Board would like to raise our hands, with the deepest of respect, and honour those who contribute to our success. Huy tseep q'u:

- > To the Elders, the wise ones, the knowledge keepers – for your wisdom, guidance, direction and teachings and reminding us that what we do today is for those yet to come.
- > To the nine Member Nations for your unwavering support of Kw'umut Lelum and for entrusting us with your children and families.
- > To all of the caretakers for supporting the sacred ones, our children.
- > To all the board members, past and present, for their passion and commitment to the children in care – your guidance, direction and leadership is invaluable.
- > And lastly, to all of the employees for your unwavering passion and commitment to children, youth and families – you make this organization what it is – Strong Roots, Strong Families.

Huy tseep q'u Siem
Qwul'sih'yah'maht – Robina Thomas

Message from the Executive Director



My name is Sqwulutsutun,
and I am from the Wyse family
of Snuneymuxw First Nation.
My English name is William Yoachim.

This past year has been one of finding strength and hope through tragedy and challenge. Our communities were deeply impacted by the announcements of horrible discoveries on the grounds of former residential schools at a time when we continued to be separated by the ongoing restrictions of the Covid pandemic.

We took comfort and strength from one another, from our snuw'uy'ulh, from our lands and our ancestors. At Kw'umut Lelum, we took every opportunity to walk beside our communities to support them in their healing. We listened closely to our people who told us what they needed and we supported them – with ceremony, with good medicine, and with opportunities to connect to culture and programs that would lift them up while honouring their need to grieve and heal.

At Kw'umut Lelum we are continuing our efforts to support our families - by providing opportunities to connect to culture, offering wellness and counselling supports, and advocating for real change to colonial systems while building better partnerships with our Nations and our allies.

The work we continue to do is due to the efforts of a huge extended family of people whose dedication to the health and wellness of our communities is guided by their hearts and teachings.

I raise my hands first and foremost to our Board of Directors who show such strong leadership and innovative vision to move us forward in a good way.

I give my gratitude to our Elders, ancestors, and knowledge-keepers who continue to show us our path and remind us how to live and work according to our snuw'uy'ulh.

I am honoured to be able to walk alongside our families, our children – who are a sacred gift – and the communities we serve. They show us the true meaning of strength and love.

And I give thanks to our staff and caregivers who show kindness, compassion and perseverance through their work.

Huy tseep q'u Siem
Sqwulutsutun – William Yoachim

Board of Directors



Dr Robina Thomas *President*
Lyackson First Nation



Mike Wyse *Vice-President*
Snuneymuwx First Nation



Aaron Hamilton *Secretary*
Lake Cowichan First Nation



Brent Edwards *Treasurer*
Snaw-Naw-As First Nation



Jodi August
Halalt First Nation



Steve Henry
Malahat First Nation



Donna Kennedy
Qualicum First Nation



Roxanne Harris
Stz'uminus First Nation



Joan Brown
Penelakut First Nation



Living Our Mission

Programs and Services

When child safety interventions are required to keep children safe Kw'umut Lelum social workers will always work with the Nation and parents to keep children in their community and living with extended family. Kw'umut Lelum cultural workers support this planning through family finding and keeping kids connected to family, culture and community.

Child Safety and Collaborative Planning

Kw'umut Lelum child safety teams take a cultural and preventative approach to build on family strengths and increase safety to keep children in the home. In situations where children cannot safely remain in the home Kw'umut Lelum child safety workers always prefer kinship agreements - where a child or youth is placed with a family member - over court driven processes. In 2021-2022, 32 at-risk children were prevented from coming into foster care through the child safety team's use of kinship care (also known as "out-of-care") agreements.

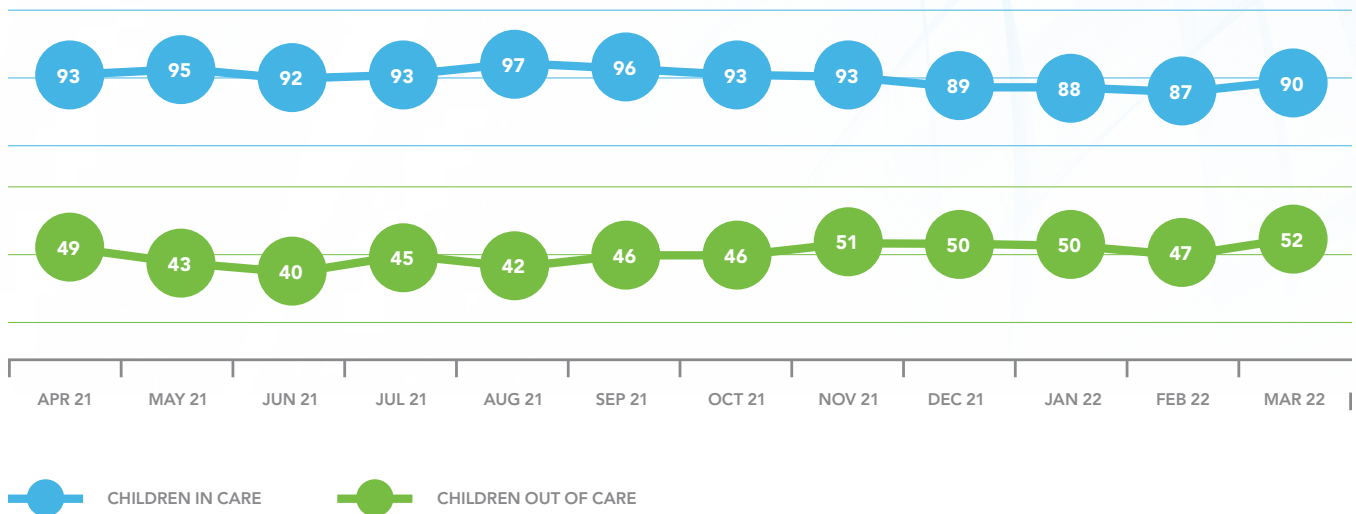
Our child safety team responded to 170 child safety reports last year, with many of the calls related to likelihood of physical harm, emotional harm and neglect. Domestic violence was a significant factor in one third of these reports. It is important to note that 28% of all calls to our child safety team were from community members directly seeking support for themselves, their families, or their children, reflecting an increasing trend of preventative services occurring before the requirement for any child safety interventions.

Guardianship and Se'ye'yu (Kinship) Program

Our agency strives to provide support to our families and children that is collaborative and truly culturally-based. We know that children belong with family within their Coast Salish communities and that our families have the strength and resiliency to care for, love and nurture their children despite colonization and a legacy of oppressive laws and child welfare practice.

- > The number of children in care continues its downward trend with 9% fewer children coming into custody in the past year.
- > Cultural Care Plan Circle meetings are scheduled every 6 months for each child in care and take a strength-based approach that includes input from the child themselves, their social worker, Nation representative, care providers and extended family, as well as cultural workers and other members of that child's care team.

CHILD SERVICES CASELOAD

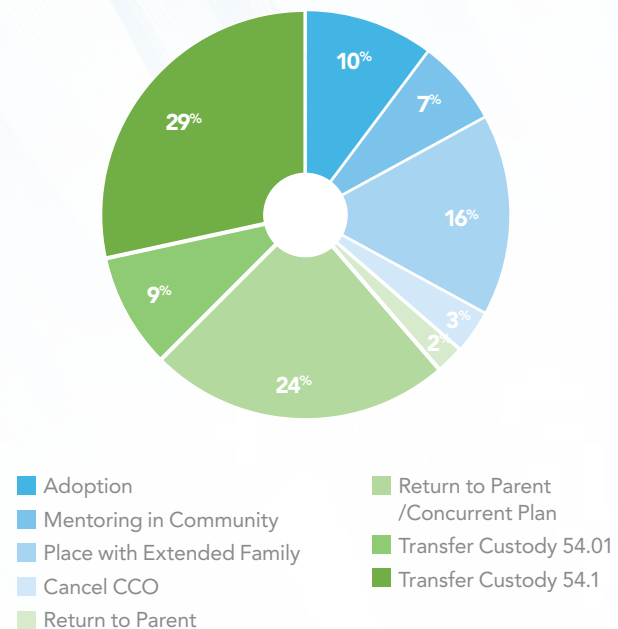


Programs and Services – continued

Permanency

In the last year, Kw'umut Lelum was able to return 13 children in care to their parents, with another 16 returned home after temporary care with relatives. We transferred another 6 out of care through permanent legal custody of a family member (54.01), and cancelled three continuing custody orders resulting in those children moving out of permanent foster care to be reunited and live with their parent. One child was adopted and an additional 7 youth reached the age of majority and Kw'umut Lelum continued to provide housing and supports through an agreement with young adult (AYA), as well as ongoing support for their independence through our Step Up program.

PERMANENCY PLANS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE – MARCH 2019



Wellness and Prevention

Helping families to be strong and healthy and connected to their culture is a crucial component to preventing children and youth from coming into care. Kw'umut Lelum provides programs and services for all ages that promote emotional and physical health, parenting skills, cultural strength, and personal growth.

Family, community and culture are essential to our children's health and wellbeing, and our children are essential to the health and wellbeing of our communities. While respecting Coast Salish practices and traditions, Kw'umut Lelum offers services and programs that keep our children safe, strengthen and preserve our families, connect to our culture, and enhance our community wellbeing.

Over the past 3 years, our programs and services have been increasingly focused around addressing the needs and challenges in our communities to help strengthen our people and their connections to land, language, family and culture.

2021/22 saw ongoing innovation in the ways in which we delivered our programs due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions. [With small in-person groups, online and virtual programming, as well as options for families during holidays, we were able to provide more than 850 program sessions across our nine Nations.](#) This represents a 55% increase over the previous year, when we were managing under several community lockdowns.

Family Services

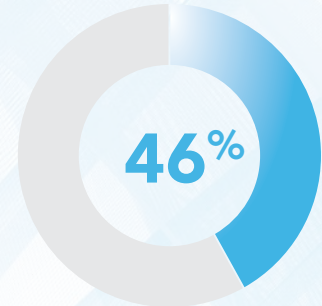
Our Family Services support workers focus on family preservation and supporting children to remain or return home with family. They often work with parents to help them achieve adequate housing, medical services and financial supports as well as access to community resources that meet their needs and individual goals. **Over the past year, our 4 workers had an average caseload of 13 people and provided more than 70 hours of direct services each month.**

Le'lumilh (Resources) and Se'ye'yu (Kinship) Program

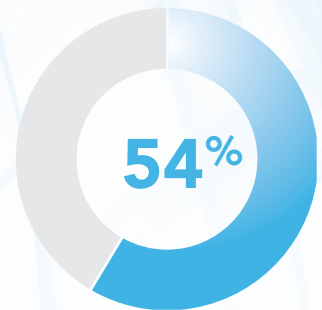
Over the past year there has been significant emphasis in the Le'lumilh program towards increased recruitment of extended family "kinship" homes and less reliance on non-relative foster homes. Kw'umut Lelum kinship workers assist in the recruitment and approval of extended family kinship homes as well as providing ongoing support to kinship care providers caring for their relative children. **Kw'umut Lelum is leading the way in support of extended family who have taken permanent custody of their relative children.**

A key priority is reducing the number of non-relative foster homes and increasing the number of emergency, temporary and permanent kinship homes in each of our nine member Nations. The Le'lumilh team is working with the Nations to support recruitment of all types of kinship homes.

For the 50% of our foster parents who are not from our member Nations, we place a huge importance on helping them to understand and embrace the unique culture of the children in their care, so that they are better able to help keep those children connected to their families, lands and teachings. **Our Coast Salish 101 training for caregivers provides opportunities to participate in immersive and experiential workshops as well as one-on-one teachings.**



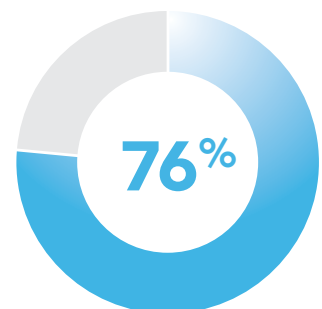
Percentage of homes on reserve



Percentage of homes off reserve



Percentage of homes of relatives



Percentage of Indigenous Caregivers

Programs and Services – continued

4 Seasons Cultural Program

4 Seasons Cultural Program supports people across our 9 communities to connect with their culture through weekly cultural programming. Children, adults and families can participate in Coast Salish weaving, moccasin making, drum circle, cooking, language, as well as other arts and learning with Knowledge Keepers. Land-based programming has been a significant focus for KL with the addition of Respecting the Harvest (traditional hunting for youth in care), mountain biking and other outdoor activities.

- > Block hands-on programming was held virtually over the past year. Multiple moccasin, weaving and other textile programs were held and guided by knowledge keepers within the 9 Nations, as well as opportunities for learning traditional medicines, cedar weaving, and traditional food preparation.
- > Weekly online drum circles with hosted drummers from different Nations kept families engaged throughout the pandemic. This program continues to be open to all Nations.
- > Despite the cancellation of the large multi-Nation gathering, our Tribal Journey paddlers embarked on a local canoe journey travelling to 7 of our 9 Nations
- > Rekindling our Spirit brought families and over 50 participants together for 2 and 3-day gatherings in Lake Cowichan for traditional and family activities

Wellness Team

Helping families to be strong and healthy is a crucial component to preventing children and youth from coming into care. Kw'umut Lelum's Wellness team works within our communities to offer a range of opportunities such as individual counselling, group recreation activities and family education events.

- > Weekly recreational programming, including fitness classes, kayaking and other excursions for children and families
- > Block programming was held for children, youth and adults with varying themes such as health and wellness, addiction, healthy parenting, and grief and loss
- > A series of 3-day wellness retreats were held separately for men and women from our communities to come together for traditional teachings, connection and personal wellbeing
- > Individualized one-on-one services for children, youth and adults provided access to mental health, wellness and cultural support.



4 Seasons Early Years

4 Seasons Early Years (4SEY) enhances early childhood development and overall family health and wellness for First Nations preschool children (birth to six years old) on reserve. Weekly Parenting and Play groups have been held virtually across our nine member Nations over the course of this past fiscal year. This shift has allowed for greater participation as we have had member Nation families attending from not only across the Province but also across the border due to accessibility. The majority of the programs offered through 4 Seasons Early Years have been accompanied by carefully curated kits to support learning and enhance engagement. Over the past year the team was able to deliver over 150 sessions to our families. A number of these programs were run multiple times due to their popularity including:

- > The Hum'na tul Book Club continued to provide early literacy intervention and to give parents/caregivers foundational knowledge on how to support early literacy through reading and by extension (literacy focused) activities.
- > Family Field Trips were held to offer opportunities for children to explore and experience places like the Bug Zoo, Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea, Flying Squirrel Trampoline Park the Royal BC Museum and McNabs Farm and Corn Maze
- > Aboriginal Infant Development Program was added to the Early Years team to support healthy infant development from Snaw-Naw-As to Stz'uminus
- > Virtual programming remained in high demand with families who can learn and enjoy activities at their own pace and schedule

Transitioning out of Care: Step Up

The Step Up program helps our youth in or from care to develop independence across 5 domains of Personal Effectiveness, Education, Housing, Culture and Community, and Employment. Step Up is a youth-driven program that is supported by a Youth Advisory Council. These youth, with the support of our Step Up Transition team, have created an assessment process designed to look at the unique strengths and needs of those referred to the program and to work collaboratively to develop comprehensive plans to support youth to gain skills and knowledge and identify supports for their transition to adulthood. The team is comprised of three Step Up Transition workers, an Educational Coordinator/Clinician and a Step Up Work Placement Navigator. Over the past fiscal year, the team spent on average 125 hours each month providing direct service to the youth on their caseloads.

In 2021, Step up implemented a new Work Placement Program to provide support in gaining employment skills and training as well as work experience opportunities and job placements. More than 20 youth have taken advantage of the program over the past year.

Child and Youth Care

The Child and Youth Care (CYC) team carry an average of 20 children and youth on their respective caseloads and are a team of 4. On average, over the past fiscal year the CYC team logged approximately 150 hours each month of direct service hours. The CYC team work closely with our social work teams to ensure a strong collaborative process that promotes cohesive care planning for children and youth both in and out of care. CYC support workers activities range from socialization and support to helping transition children who are returning home to their families.



Highlights of 2020/2021

The past year has continued to see Kw'umut Lelum grow and change to meet the needs of our children, families and communities. We are celebrating our successes and acknowledge the work we still have ahead of us. Below are just some of the highlights of our year.

Cedar Gala Celebrates 25 Years

Thursday, March 24th, Kw'umut Lelum hosted a Cedar Gala where we celebrated 25 years of providing Indigenous-centered programming and services as an agency, as well as the creation of the newly-launched Kw'umut Lelum Foundation. At the VI Conference Centre, more than 250 guests gathered together for an opportunity to recognize and honour our incredible achievements over the past 25 years and to collaborate, grow partnerships, and unite efforts to expand cultural, economic, social, educational, and recreational access for our families.

Museum-style exhibits encouraged attendees to learn about Coast Salish history, culture and art, and the program included singers, dancers, a fashion show by Ay Lelum, and a video retrospective of Kw'umut Lelum's community impact. A silent auction featuring items created by Coast Salish artists, as well as donations from attendees throughout the night, raised thousands of dollars for the KL Foundation, alongside a thrilling announcement from both the MasterCard Foundation and Indspire who pledged considerable sums to help the Foundation fund needed programs within our communities.



Highlights Of 2020/2021

Nan Uw Xexe Thu S'alh Sqwal - Our language is sacred

The ongoing impacts of colonization on Indigenous culture have resulted in a near eradication of the Hul'qumi'num language spoken by many of our Coast Salish Nations. Kw'umut Lelum has responded to this crisis with the development of a series of beginner Hul'qumi'num language videos on our YouTube channel.

The lessons use simple repetition and clear pronunciation to help new speakers get the hang of the language. The videos included a wide range of themes including beginner greetings, days of the week, months of the year, counting, numbers and containers, animals, and ways to describe the day.

New House Post a Symbol of Welcome and Protection

In April 2021, Kw'umut Lelum installed a 16-foot House Post, soaring at 534 Centre St. on Snuneymuxw First Nation. The beautiful work of art tells a story of the history of our people, traditions, and ancestors; symbolizing protection and strength to our communities, families and children across our 9 member Nations.

The small unveiling ceremony took place with Snuneymuxw artist, Noel Brown, and Kw'umut Lelum Board and Staff. At the bottom of the house post is an eagle sheltering a baby with its wings. "The eagle always takes care and looks over the children at all times, which Kw'umut Lelum does," Brown said. "Above the eagle is a lady with her blanket, which keeps the children warm. Above that is a killer whale, which looks after us at sea."

Taking Back Our Waters – First Annual Kukiyouk Fishing Derby

KL Chose June 21st – Indigenous People's Day – to launch our first annual fishing derby. National Indigenous People's Day is often a time for us to gather and celebrate our culture, our resilience, and our families. For Kw'umut Lelum's 4 Seasons of Culture team, it was also an opportunity to celebrate our inherent rights, and enjoy a little friendly competition in the process.

The Ku'ki'yook (fishing with a hook) Fishing Derby launched from Shell Beach in Stz'uminus with 20 boats from 4 different Nations in search of the largest ling cod and a chance to win the top prize. The real winners of the day were our Coast Salish children and youth – each registered boat was required to have at least one participant under 18 – who were given the opportunity to learn an important lesson about the right to provide food for their community.





Paddling Home – Tribal Journey 2021

Every year since 2009, Kw’umut Lelum has participated in Pacific Coastal Tribal Journeys with participants from hundreds of Nations that have offered a chance for our youth in care to connect with each other and with their culture.

With the global pandemic cancelling the event for a second year in a row, Kw’umut Lelum’s Canoe Family took on a week-long paddle to visit 7 of our 9 member Nations. Paddling up the Salish Sea from Malahat to Qualicum, they landed at each territory requesting permission to come ashore as their ancestors have done for millennia.

While the youth did not perform their protocol alongside a multitude of other canoe families this year, they experienced many opportunities for community members to come out and support and join together as a Coast Salish family. It was a welcome chance to build a stronger sense of self, to heal, to learn, and to have fun.

Healing as One – March for the Children

Thousands gathered in Chemainus on August 2nd for the Spune’luxutth Sulxwe’en Memorial Walk (or March for the Children) in memory of the lost children and survivors of Kuper Island Industrial School on Penelakut. The Kw’umut Lelum staff, including wellness counsellors, were on hand to provide emotional support and cultural healing to attendees. In true Coast Salish tradition, we brought plenty of food and drink to nourish our families in their time of grief and healing, handing out hundreds of sandwiches, snacks, fruit, water and juice. Staff offered friendly smiles and contributed to the sense of togetherness and community as we shared this journey with our Penelakut family.



For Love Film Premieres in Nanaimo

Kw'umut Lelum presented the free premiere showing of documentary film *For Love* to a full house at the Port Theatre in Nanaimo. The documentary, written and produced by Mary Teegee (Maaxw Gibuu), and directed by Matt Smiley, looks at how Indigenous communities in Canada are taking back jurisdictional control of their children. It features a segment with the Kw'umut Lelum Canoe family that was filmed during the 2019 Tribal Journey.

Given the difficult subject matter, KL had counselling staff on hand in case anyone needed support. However, the film also presents a message of hope, and showcases the deep and abiding love that Indigenous people have for their children.

Coast Salish 101

To ensure that each child's cultural rights are supported, every person in their care circle needs to be an advocate for culture. For caregivers who are not part of the child's community or Nation, they can sometimes struggle to not only understand the importance of culture, but also how to make those vital connections between the child and their *snuw'uyulh*. KL's Cultural Permanency team launched an innovative training program - *Coast Salish 101* - to bridge those gaps for caregivers and the children in their care. The program shares information about the history, culture and colonization of Coast Salish people, and also provides land-based teachings on the territories of our 9 Member Nations. *Coast Salish 101* offers workshops on traditional foods, language, prayer and other aspects of culture. This provides opportunities for caregivers to develop a better understanding of the vital importance of our culture to our personal identity and wellbeing, and to be better advocates for the inherent rights of the children in their care.

“ Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.”

**TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION
COMMISSION REPORT**

Children. Culture. Community.



Kw'umut Lelum

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