



Kw'umut Lelum

Children. Culture. Community.



Photo By Tricia Thomas

**2018/2019**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

# Governance

## Children. Culture. Community.

### Purpose

It is the purpose of Kw'umut Lelum's Board of Directors to strive for excellence in the governance of the agency, with deep respect for our Snuw'uyulh and the sacredness of our Nations. There is a commitment to the values of accountability, transparency, fairness, timeliness, and integrity.

### Objectives

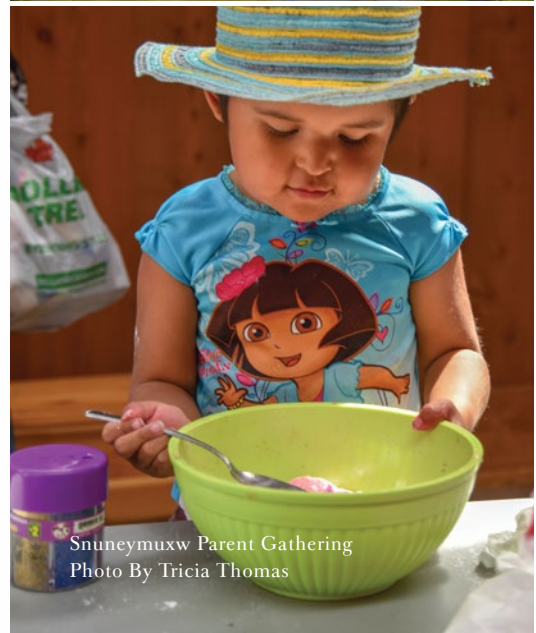
- > Seek, obtain and manage funding in order to meet the needs of children and families
- > Recognize the diversity of our Member Nations and adhere to the culturally appropriate approaches pertinent to each of the respective communities
- > Strive to ensure that the children of our communities are safe and protected
- > Strive to ensure that all our children are returned to the care of their Nation

### Principles

- > The mandate for our work comes from our Member Nations
- > Our children's best interest will be the most important consideration in all our decisions
- > Family and community are essential to our children
- > We will strive to maintain the best practice in keeping with our respect for our Member Nations in the care of our children
- > Striving for the safety and well being of our children though the provision of services using least intrusive measures
- > Comply with all applicable legislation, but recognize these are the minimum standards of diligence



Canoe Steaming  
Photo By Tricia Thomas



Snuneymuxw Parent Gathering  
Photo By Tricia Thomas



Canoe Steaming  
Photo By Tricia Thomas

# Member Nations



## Halalt First Nation

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



## Lake Cowichan First Nation

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



## Lyackson First Nation

Chief Rick Thomas  
7973A Chemainus Road  
Chemainus, BC  
Phone: (250) 246-5019



## Málexel Nation (Malahat)

110 Thunder Rd,  
Mill Bay, BC  
Phone: (250) 743-3231



## Penelakut Tribe

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



## Qualicum First Nation

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



## Snaw-Naw-As First Nation (Nanoose)

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



## Snuneymuxw First Nation

Chief Mike Wyse  
668 Centre St  
Nanaimo, B.C.  
Phone: (250) 740-2300



## Stz' uminus First Nation (Chemainus)

Chief John Elliott  
12611A Trans Canada Highway,  
Ladysmith, BC  
(250) 245-7155

# Message from the President

'au siem nu sii'ye'yu, 'uy skweyul siem. Qwul'sih'yah'maht  
thunu s'hwulmuhw'a'lh sne. Tun'ni 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, but 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 my honour to represent the Board of Directors for Kw'umut Lelum. Every year we expand our services, and this year has not been an exception. It is reassuring to stop and reflect on the past year and acknowledge the good work that has taken place. This year, we decided to take up our fiduciary obligation to protect the children of the nine-member nations wherever they reside; in other words, to serve both on and off-reserve children. This was not an easy task, and I raise my hands with the deepest of respect for the commitment and determination of the Kw'umut Lelum leadership team. Last year I reported that we have moved back into our newly renovated building, and this year I will report that we have grown so quickly that we are expanding to accommodate our growth and so again, we are under renovations. We are also creating satellite offices to accommodate our growth.

Of critical importance for the wellbeing of our children and families is prevention work. We now have a prevention team to help us deliver programs. We will continue to host the culture camp, Hope and Health Soccer Camp, Tribal Journeys, as well as a host of other wellbeing activities.

Our agency depends on the dedication and support of many to be successful. I would like to raise my hands and acknowledge everyone who has contributed to the success of Kw'umut Lelum. Huy tseep q'u:

- > To the Elders, the wise ones, the knowledge keepers – for your guidance, direction and teachings and reminding us that what we do today is for those yet to come.
- > To the nine Member Nations for supporting Kw'umut Lelum and allowing our organization to flourish.
- > 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 staff for your dedication 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



## Board of Directors



**Dr Robina Thomas** *President*  
Lyackson First Nation



**Mike Wyse** *Vice-President*  
Snuneymuwx First Nation



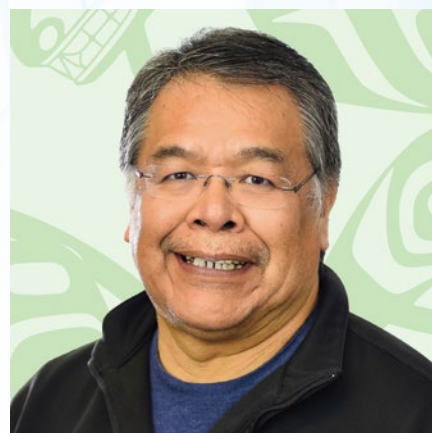
**Aaron Hamilton** *Secretary*  
Lake Cowichan First Nation



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



**Dan Norris**  
Halalt First Nation



**Vince Harry**  
Malahat First Nation



**Donna Kennedy**  
Qualicum First Nation



**John Elliott**  
Stz'uminus First Nation



**Joan Brown**  
Penelakut First Nation

# Message from the Executive Director

My name is Sqwulutsutun, I come from the Wyse family of Snuneymuxw First Nation. My English name is William Yoachim. As the Executive Director of Kw'umut Lelum, I am honoured to have worked for children and families in our nine member Nations since 2008.

The past year has been one of accelerated change as our agency grew and expanded to include Urban services in Nanaimo, and began to implement exciting new prevention-based strategies and wellness programs. These changes are crucial to serving our people who continue to experience what is being called a "humanitarian crisis" of Aboriginal children in care.

These changes represent an important recognition of Indigenous self-determination. Kw'umut Lelum's services and programs are developed in collaboration with our Nations, Elders and the families we serve; they respect and preserve their spirituality, language, culture and heritage. They recognize the inherent right and responsibility of the Nations for the social wellbeing and safety of their children.

Our unique approach is completely counter to the trends of child welfare in Canada. We work hard to keep children with their families – nearly half of all of the children on our caseload are currently living with a parent or relative, including those in what would be considered to be foster care. Not only that, but we see fewer children entering care and more finding a safe home with family members. And while I take pride in the results we are showing as an agency, I know our successes are due to the efforts of so many people.

I raise my hands to our Board of Directors and the leadership of our Member Nations whose guidance and direction gave us the clear vision to create better opportunities for our families and our most treasured children.

I thank the Elders and knowledge keepers who keep us rooted in our Snuw'uyulh and show us the ways of being that help us to be stronger and better.

I honour the families, the caregivers, the parents and the communities, who show their love for our beautiful young ones by opening their hearts and homes.

Finally, I recognize the tireless dedication of our staff who care so passionately for the wellbeing of these children and youth and who work to raise up our families and make them stronger.

Huy ch' qa  
Sqwulutsutun – William Yoachim





# Living Our Mission

## Programs and Services

Nearly half of all of the children on our caseload are currently living with a parent or relative, including those in what would be considered to be foster care. They haven't been taken from their families to live with strangers; they are with their families.

### Child Safety and Collaborative Planning

At Kw'umut Lelum, our approach to child safety is about keeping families together. The number of children in this province who have been removed from their families is still far too high – 2210 in the last year. Kw'umut Lelum removed only one Member Nation child in all of 2018 – and that child was immediately placed with a close family member in their community.

Our team uses a collaborative approach to child safety – working with the parents, extended family, Nations and other community resources – to help support families at risk and prevent children from coming into care.

In 2018 we kept 28 at-risk kids out of care by finding and supporting extended family members to look after them - meaning our children are able to stay in their home communities, with the least amount of disruption to their lives as possible.

- > In the province last year, only one in 5 children in need of a safe home were placed with extended family – others were admitted into foster care. At Kw'umut Lelum, we are able to find family care for 2 out of 3



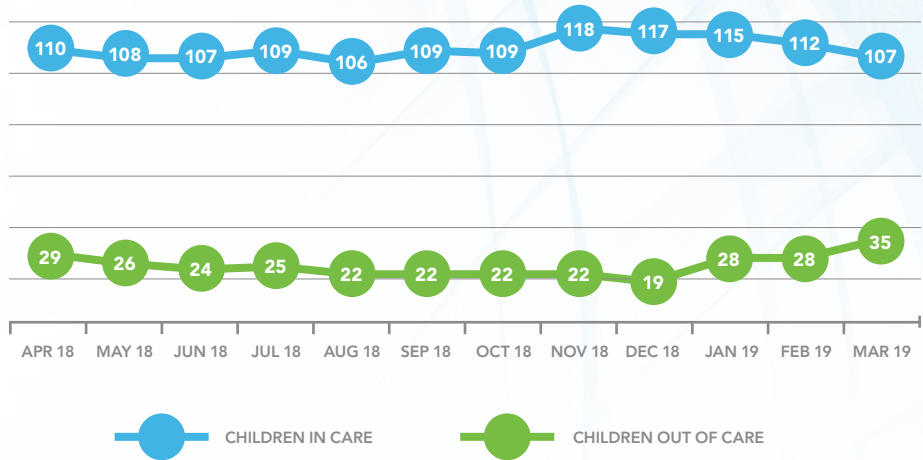
- > Our Children in Care caseload has remained fairly consistent over the reporting period, despite our expansion into urban Nanaimo in November. Our number of children in out of care placements (placed with family members) has seen a 20% increase, reflecting an ongoing trend of keeping at-risk children within their family circles
- > All of our children in care receive referrals to our Cultural Permanency Program who help to facilitate our goal of finding permanent homes with relatives within their community. 76% of our current permanency plans for children in care are focused on reunification or a transfer of custody to family members

### Guardianship Services

Guardianship of our children and youth involves their physical care and decision-making responsibility concerning such areas as residential care placement, education, health and emotional and behavioral development.

Working closely with caregivers and their support system, our social workers and cultural workers develop a cultural plan for our children and youth that is central to their care and informs ALL decision making.

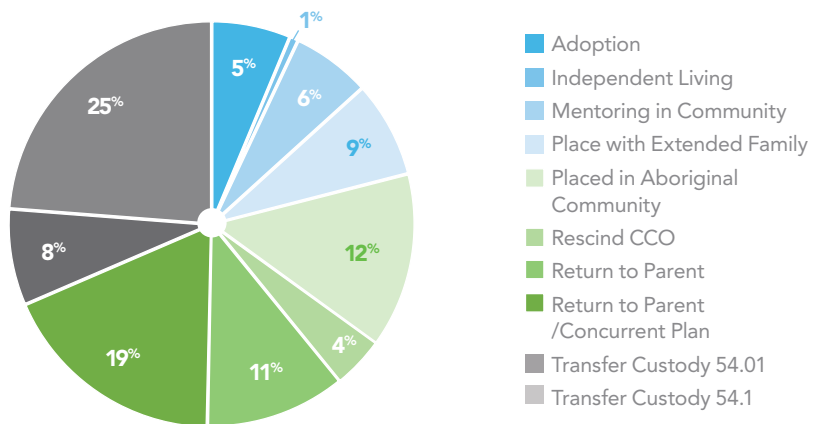
#### CHILD SERVICES CASELOAD



### PERMANENCY

In the last year, we were able to return 13 children to their parents, reunited another 16 with permanent legal custody of a family member and placed 6 through adoption to extended family and long-time caregivers.

#### PERMANENCY PLANS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE - MARCH 2019



## Programs and Services – continued

### 4 Seasons Early Years

4 Season 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 Kw'umut Lelum Parenting and Play groups are held in Qualicum, Snaw-Naw-As, Stz'uminus, Penelakut and Snuneymuxw.

- > Collaboration with VIU nursing program integrates nutrition and general health programming into our regular group activities
- > Partnership with Tillicum Lelum delivered "Walking With Elders" program designed to help support early literacy skills for Aboriginal children
- > Baby welcome kits were developed with input from program participants and distributed to new parents across our Member Nation



Stz'uminus Parent Gathering · Photo By Tricia Thomas

### Le'lumilh Services

Caring for our children is paramount to Kw'umut Lelum as a whole and to persons who open their heart and home. The Le'lumilh Program provides training and support to persons interesting in becoming caregivers to children or youth who are, for various reasons, unable to remain at home.

### 4 Seasons Cultural Program

Our Four Seasons Cultural Program has expanded over the past year to provide programming 5 days per week. With new funding for prevention services, Kw'umut Lelum was also able to expand the reach of this program to include all Member Nation children and youth, not just those in care. Annual special programs include Tribal Journey, Hope and Health and Cultural Camp.

- > Nearly half of all of the children on our caseload are currently living with a parent or relative, including those in what would be considered to be foster care. They haven't been taken from their families to live with strangers; they are with their families
- > More than 70 active caregivers and extended family members (on and off-reserve) and 2 group homes provide culturally-responsive parenting to children who are unable to live at home with their parents
- > New monthly in-house training program for caregivers provides an orientation and ongoing insights into the unique cultures of our 9 Member Nations

### Transitions from Care: Step Up

The Step Up Program is a comprehensive transitioning program that is youth developed and led. Youth in care ages 16-18 are engaged to participate in the program – identified by the youth’s guardianship worker and referred to the Step Up Clinician.

They undergo an assessment process designed to look at their unique strengths and needs across five domains:

1. Employment and Career;
2. Education;
3. Housing;
4. Personal Effectiveness & Wellbeing; and
5. Community and Culture

A plan is developed with the youth to address challenges and reinforce strengths. A Step Up Clinician helps support implementation of the plan along with others such as education counsellors, peer mentors, etc. This plan is further supported by the Step Up App that allows the youth and clinicians to track their progress toward achieving their goals and to offer encouragement through real-world rewards for their successes.



Cultural Milestones Celebration · Photo By Tricia Thomas

# Highlights 2018 /2019

Over the past year, Kw'umut Lelum has experienced extensive changes. Guided by the mandate of our Nations, and with significant engagement and input from the members of our communities, we expanded to include both Urban (off-reserve) services and prevention programs.

With new funding and focus, we expanded our staff team by nearly 20 people, opened a new office in Nanaimo, implemented a new wellness team and expanded our cultural and prevention services to include all of our member Nation families: not only children in care.

## **Kw'umut Lelum Expands into Urban Services**

Responding to the mandate from our Member Nations, Kw'umut Lelum negotiated the provision of our services to include all of our children and families, wherever they live - not just those living on reserve. The first step in this service expansion occurred in November 2018 when we began to offer services to children and families in Nanaimo and Parksville. We oversaw the transfer of dozens of child safety and family services files from MCFD to our new Urban Services Team, and were able to open a satellite office on Prideaux St. to better serve our Urban Aboriginal families. Our next step in 2019 will be providing services to those Member Nation families living in Duncan.

## **New 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 is reinforcing our 4 Seasons prevention programming with a new Wellness Team who began working with our families and communities in early 2019. A team of counsellors provide mental health and wellness supports that is consistent with western treatment standards and Coast Salish Snuw'yulh.

The Wellness team will work within our communities to offer a range of opportunities from individual counselling to group recreation activities to family education events. Programming will support parents and caregivers to address mental health, coping skills, addictions, domestic violence and to promote engaged parenting. For children and youth we intend to promote social, emotional and spiritual development, address mental health issues, promote healthy lifestyles through participation in physical activities and sport.



Prideaux St. Grand Opening

### Community Prevention Workers

Kw'umut Lelum is providing funding and support to our Member Nations to engage new Community Prevention Workers. Each Nation is hiring their own worker whose role will be to work with families at risk, identify supports in the community, and help prevent children from coming into care.

### Talking Circles Engage Community Members

In January, Kw'umut Lelum convened 7 Talking Circles, inviting members from all of our 9 Member Nations. We had 60 participants attend in total.

The Talking Circles were intended to build on the work of the Community Needs Assessment project undertaken in the summer of 2018. The Talking Circle approach was chosen as a culturally appropriate way to reach out and engage with our membership on issues of importance to the community and to also share information about new programs and services.

### Joining Two Houses: Kw'umut Lelum and Tillicum Work Together for Families

In November, Kw'umut Lelum and Tillicum Lelum entered into an agreement that will help to provide enhanced and integrated services for Indigenous children and families in Nanaimo. The agreement establishes our two agencies, who together have 75 years of collected experience helping Aboriginal families, as S'Qa'shintul I' Tsi'tsuwatul: "Those who are walking with and helping each other".

Being able to connect our Urban families and children to supportive programming is crucial - like supervised family visits, youth housing, housing for new mothers, and early childhood development. Tillicum Lelum has a reputation for quality services that directly address the unique cultural and social needs of the urban Aboriginal population in Nanaimo and collaboration between the two agencies will help families to access needed services quickly and efficiently.



Canoe Launch · Photo By Ashley Marston



Canoe Launch · Photo By Tricia Thomas

### A New Canoe is Awakened

Slhexun's tthu Xpey' (Medicine of the Cedar) provided a chance to bring key teachings to our kids, to connect them to their land and to their culture, and to inspire them through art. The program, part of the 4 Seasons of Culture, engaged children and youth in a year-long journey learning Coast Salish history, language, songs, and craft (like cedar harvesting and carving). It culminated in the awakening and launch of a new 41-foot canoe, carved from a cedar log by renowned Coast Salish artist Luke Marston and his brother John, along with Kw'umut Lelum youth.

The canoe, Lhqel' ts' qixune' tun, was named, blessed and put in the water at a ceremony in Stz'uminus, and 2 weeks later carried our canoe family on their journey to Puyallup.

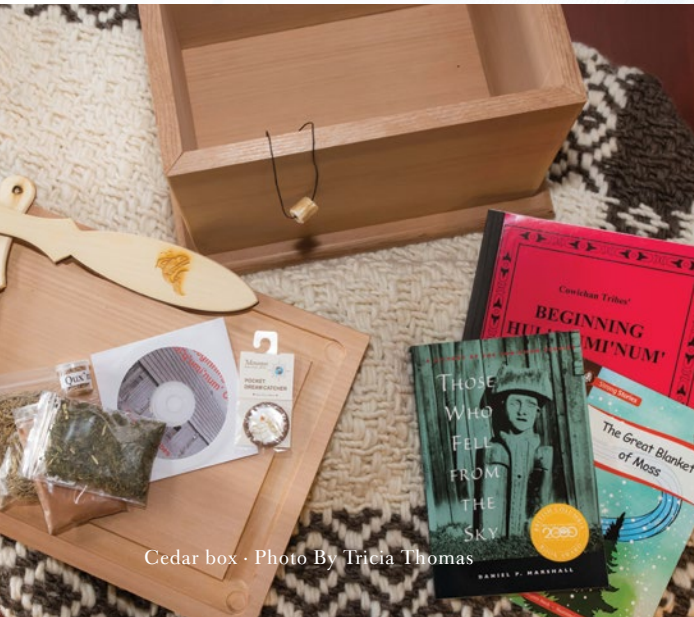
### Hope and Health Rallies Through the Smoke

Despite the ominous skies tinged with the smoke of summer wildfires, over 220 children and youth from more than 25 Nations attended this year's Hope and Health soccer event. After the opening ceremonies, including a welcome from Snuneymuxw Chief Mike Wyse, the kids were entertained by Whitecaps Team mascot Spike and Indigenous hip-hop duo Mob Bounce. They were then treated to a day of soccer drills with players and coaches from the Whitecaps and the VIU Mariners. In between drills they took time for snacks, face-painting, crafts or scaling the bouncy castles.

While the day was about sport and having fun, Hope and Health is about so much more: the vision is to provide Indigenous children and youth with the tools to carry themselves with pride and confidence, achieve their highest potential and dream big.

## Our Vision For the Future

- > Kw'umut Lelum is holding onto the dream for our children.
- > We will lift them up so they know how much we value and cherish them.
- > We will strive to ensure all our children have opportunities to know who they are, and are PROUD to be Xwulmuxw Mustimuxw!
- > We will continue our work with youth, rooted in the traditional teachings and following the Coast Salish Way.
- > We will be a rock of support for all our families in need and walk beside them on their journey.
- > When we have done our work and reached our goals, we envision a world where there is no need for child welfare in our Nations.



Cedar box · Photo By Tricia Thomas

### Xe'Xe' Syuxtse: Sacred Gifts

As an Aboriginal agency, we know that Aboriginal children and youth in care benefit substantially from being connected to their community and to their culture. It helps them to learn who they are, where they come from, and how to live a good life. Our culture not only strengthens us, it heals us. In an effort to bring cultural teachings to every one of our Smuneem', more than 100 beautiful cedar boxes were distributed to children in care across our nine Member Nations. Each box was filled with xe'xe' syuxtse – knowledge, teachings and medicines that reflect and reinforce the cultural identity of our Smuneem'. They contained medicines, books, toys and other items that celebrate and honour their culture, as well as a Hul'q'umi'num primer that children and their families can use to learn language together.

*“ 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

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Kw'umut Lelum

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