



Kw'umut Lelum

Children. Culture. Community.



2019/2020
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



Member Nations



Halalt First Nation

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



Ts'uubaa'asatx (Lake Cowichan)

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)

Chief George Harry Jr.
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. 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 my honour to be a member of the Board of Directors for Kw'umut Lelum. It is always an exciting time to reflect on good work that has taken place over the past twelve months, and this year is no exception. Over the past few years, the Board has directed KL to embrace our fiduciary obligation to protect the children of the nine-member nations wherever they reside (on and off-reserve). To meet this responsibility, KL opened up two new offices – one in Nanaimo and one in Duncan – to be able to offer services to our children and families living in those communities. I raise my hands -- with the deepest of respect -- for the commitment and determination of the Kw'umut Lelum leadership team to see this challenge through to fruition.

I really want to acknowledge the leadership and staff of KL for their handling of the myriad of changes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to our organization. From protection, to guardianship, to wellness, to administration – everyone came together to ensure that every child was safe. Prevention work is so important during a crisis, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, KL remained committed to the wellbeing of our children and families. An important teaching that guides and directs the work that KL does is Ts'its'uwatul' tseep – to help one another or to work together. KL depends on the dedication and support of many to be successful. I would like to raise my hands and honour those who contribute to our success. 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 your unwavering support of Kw'umut Lelum and for trusting us to work 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 staff for your dedication, 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.

The past year has seen accelerated growth for our agency – with the implementation of culturally-based wellness and prevention services we have seen our staff numbers nearly double. This growth has resulted in positive changes for our communities as we increase programming offered to our Member Nations – from men’s support circles, self-esteem groups for women and girls, parenting and early years programs, youth conferences and recreation supports.

Our unique approach to keeping children in the care of their families and communities has been recognized both locally, nationally and globally. We have hosted a delegation from New Zealand, shared our experiences with the Minister of Indigenous Services for Canada, and had our good work lauded in the BC legislature. It is our hope that by sharing wise practices informed by the traditional laws and ways of our ancestors, that we can inspire others to shed the colonial practices that continue to threaten our Indigenous children.

As our Elders tell us, we must always be open to learning and moving forward in a good way. This March, in the face of a global pandemic, we all had to re-evaluate not only how we worked together to support our families, but were also given a lesson in what is truly essential and important. Our agency, with the support of our Board, was able to quickly implement a new way of providing virtual supports to our families to help “flatten the curve” using technology, and continued to provide an essential service during the province’s lockdown. We also mobilized our wellness team and other staff to step up our mental health services and youth outreach in recognition of the increased strain caused by social isolation and triggered by existing trauma. I am very proud of the way we all came together as one to face this challenge, and the lessons we have learned will continue to serve us as we adapt to this ongoing health crisis.

I know that our work could not be done without the ongoing efforts of so many. I raise my hands to our Board of Directors for their strong leadership and vision.

We stand supported by the wisdom and teachings of our ancestors and give gratitude to our Elders and knowledge-keepers who show us how to live and work in a good way.

We honour the families, the communities and the children – our xe’xe’ smun’eem – by walking together with them on their journey.

And I give thanks to our staff and caregivers whose work is guided by true care for the wellbeing of our families.

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



James (Bert) Thomas
Halalt First Nation



Steve Henry
Malahat First Nation



Donna Kennedy
Qualicum First Nation



John Elliott
Stz'uminus First Nation



Joan Brown
Penelakut First Nation



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 and communities together.

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 2019-2020 we kept 32 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.

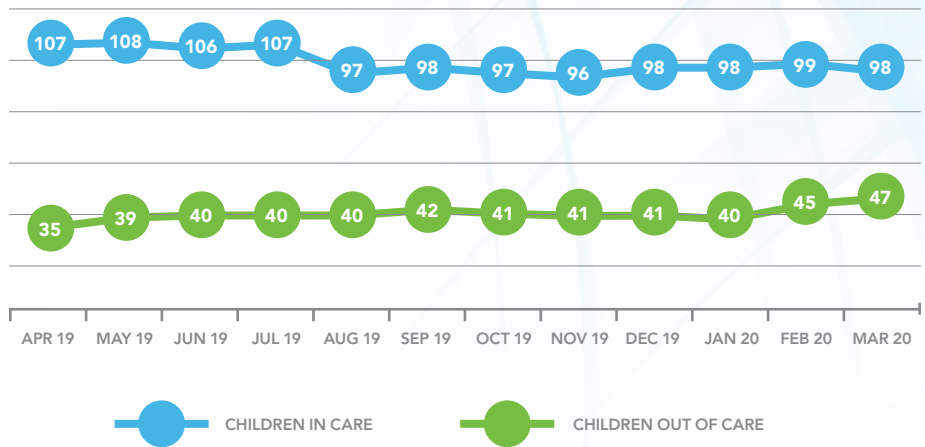
- > Despite expansion into urban services, the number of children in our care continues to fall – nearly 10% over the past year. Our number of children in out of care placements (placed with family members) has seen a 34% increase, reflecting an ongoing trend of keeping at-risk children within their 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. 82% of our current permanency plans for 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.

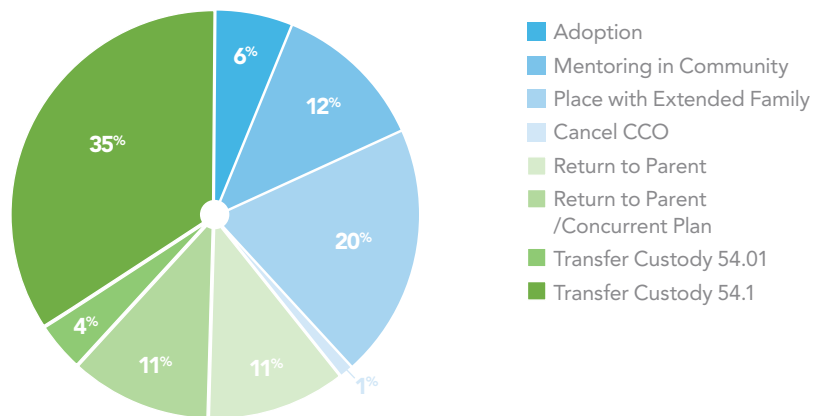
CHILD SERVICES CASELOAD



PERMANENCY

In the last year, we were able to return 29 children to their parents, reunited another 11 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 Parenting and Play groups are held in Qualicum, Snaw-Naw-As, Stz'uminus, Penelakut, and Snuneymuxw.



- > “Strong Bodies Healthy Minds” program delivered hands-on health and nutrition education to parents through weekly cooking classes and exercise.
- > The Family Literacy Program taught skills to children to read and write, and prepare them to be successful in school.
- > Participation in bi-monthly “Healthy Start” fairs allows our program initiatives to reach a broader audience through community collaboration with other Early Years programs and services.

Le'lumilh Services

Caring for our children is paramount to Kw'umut Lelum and reflects the traditional values of our people. The Le'lumilh Program provides training and support to those interested in becoming caregivers to children or youth who are, for various reasons, unable to remain at home.

Transitions from Care: Step Up

The Step Up Program is a comprehensive transitioning program that is youth developed and led. Youth in care 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 of independence and together develop a plan to gain skills and knowledge and identify supports for their transition to adulthood.

- > 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 90 active caregivers and extended family members (in community and in urban areas) and 2 group homes provide culturally-responsive parenting to children who are unable to live at home with their parents.
- > Monthly in-house training program for caregivers provides an orientation and ongoing insights into the unique cultures of our 9 Member Nations, and support circles provide an opportunity to share and learn from others.



4 Seasons Cultural Program

4 Seasons Cultural Program supports children and youth across our 9 communities to connect with their culture through weekly cultural programming. Children and families can participate in Coast Salish weaving, learn Hul'qumi'num, sit in on a drum circle, or learn to carve with elders, artists and knowledge keepers.

- > Indigenous children and families had the opportunity to celebrate and participate in the revitalization of the Hul'qumi'num language in Stz'uminus. The event was open to all and featured language learning games, sports, storytelling, music and dancing.
- > A three day Cultural Day Camp in August brought 35 children and youth together to experience a wide range of cultural, recreation and wellness activities. There was an introduction to the sweat lodge, family tree station, drumming/singing/language session, mini drum-making workshop and fishing charter.
- > New Year's Day Jam Session brought families from all Nations together to start off the new year in a good way by sharing songs and dances.

- > Weekly men's and women's wellness circles bring a traditional approach to healing. Many incorporate use of our own "House of Healing" sweat lodge to share good medicine while others involved multi-day retreats to build a sense of sharing and community.
- > We collaborated with 2 community schools (Penelakut, Snuneymuxw) to offer weekly recreation and nutritional events for more than 300 students that incorporated sports and a community meal.
- > Weekly ball hockey program ran for 6 months in Nanaimo and had up to 40 participants learning skills and drills with Kw'umut Lelum's own home-grown coaching team with support from the VIU Mariners and Nanaimo Clippers

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 from individual counselling to group recreation activities to family education events.



Highlights 2019 /2020

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.

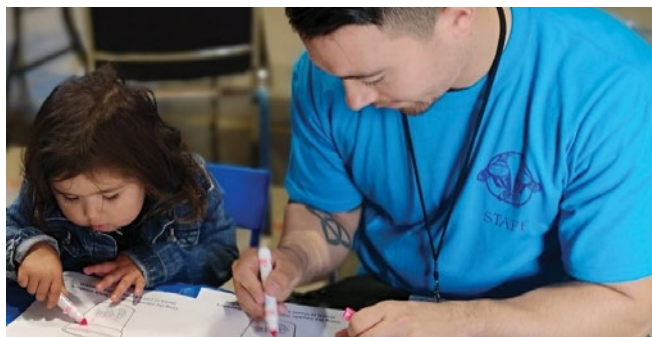
With new funding and focus, we expanded our staff team by nearly 20 people, opened a new office in Nanaimo, implemented a new wellness team and expanded our cultural and prevention services to include all of our member Nation families: not only children in care.

Snuneymuxw Homecoming Event

Kw'umut Lelum and Snuneymuxw First Nation hosted a homecoming ceremony to honour our children and youth on April 26th. 35 children and youth with a connection to Snuneymuxw, their caregivers/foster families and birth families gathered at the Bighouse in Cedar. The dialogue and gathering was held to celebrate identity and gain insight into traditional teachings and ceremony. Each youth was blanketed and brushed off by the sacred (Sxwai xwi) masks.

Community Feasts

The entire 4 Seasons Team – Wellness, Culture and Early Years hosted a series of community feasts across 7 of 8 member Nations through the spring and summer. It was a fantastic opportunity for staff to connect with the membership, celebrate culture and togetherness and share ways that Kw'umut Lelum can help support the families within our communities. We were honoured by the incredible response from families - more than 400 people came out to meet with us and share a meal. This valuable exercise enabled Kw'umut Lelum to create connection, listen to the needs of membership and share information about new programs from Wellness, Culture and Early Years teams including: weekly men's groups, sports and recreation (soccer), parenting groups, teen girl's empowerment group, women's group, drumming and carving and so much more.



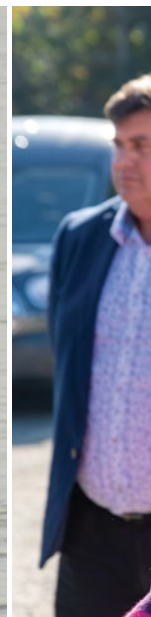
Spring Break

Kw'umut Lelum 4 Seasons Culture and Wellness teams organized two full weeks of events for children and youth over spring break. Participants enjoyed fun games and recreation at the Snuneymuxw Wellness and Recreation Centre. There were also planned field trips to Victoria, Cathedral Grove and Englishman River Provincial Park as well as recreational games such as bowling, swimming and skating. Participants learned about connection to the water and the land and had plenty of fun!

Documentary Release

July 4th marked the film premiere of Slhexun's tthu X'pey – Medicine of the Cedar which drew a large and enthusiastic crowd to the Port Place Theatre. The event featured performances by the Kw'umut Lelum Canoe Family, Lawrence Mitchell, and Trent Jack, as well as an opportunity for a Q&A with those involved in the film. The evening was an incredible opportunity to learn about the healing and strength derived from being connected to our culture, our land and to ourselves. The 40-minute film, as well as a series of short vignettes, has been released for streaming on the Kw'umut Lelum YouTube channel.





Tribal Journey

July 17 – 29 marked the annual canoe pull from Puyallup to Lummi, Washington. The Kw'umut Lelum Canoe Family included sixteen Children and Youth in Care working alongside Kw'umut Lelum staff within this transformational and immersive cultural event related to the lands and waters. Overcoming challenges, working as a team, proudly sharing cultural songs and dance and lifting one another to persevere.

Hope and Health

Hope and Health in Nanaimo had the biggest registration ever with more than 400 children from 15 different Nations. This day celebrates Indigenous health and wellness by connecting through sport - namely soccer – and brings together players from the Vancouver Whitecaps, VIU Mariners and Pacific FC with our families for a fantastic day of play.

Youth Conference

February 22, 2020 – Kw'umut Lelum hosted a youth conference at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo. The event attracted nearly 100 youth from all 9 of our Member Nations and beyond. Interactive workshops included topic areas such as goal setting, sobriety/addictions and living the good life, promotion of life and healthy relationships was facilitated by Suzette Amaya and Mike Scott. Participants also interacted with several service providers throughout the day to learn about other interesting programs and opportunities. The event concluded with a dinner and dance deejay'ed by DJ Staniml.

Kw'umut Lelum Pandemic Response

In mid-March 2020, our agency, along with the rest of the country, had to respond to an unprecedented public health crisis as a novel coronavirus spread its way across the globe. As an essential service, we needed to be nimble and creative in order to continue to support our children, families and communities while keeping health and safety as our top priority.

Through rapid implementation of our Pandemic Response Plan, we were able to support employees to work from home almost exclusively, utilizing video conferencing technology and social media to maintain connections to our families and to our colleagues. Our staff rose to the challenge, adjusting to this new reality and finding new and creative ways to offer health, wellness and cultural supports through Zoom webinars, fitness routines and Facebook support groups.



New Zealand Delegation

October 9, 2019 – Kw'umut Lelum and Snuneymuxw were honoured to host a delegation from New Zealand that included Minister Tracey Martin and high commissioner to Canada Daniel Mellsop. The minister was on an education tour across Canada to learn about best practices for Indigenous children in care. She was interested to meet with Kw'umut Lelum to see Indigenous communities can be empowered to take back responsibility for caring for their children and prevent children from coming into care. Following the meeting, the delegation was taken to the Snuneymuxw big house where they were honoured with ceremony. During a shared meal, Kw'umut Lelum's canoe family youth performed song and dances for the assembled staff and honoured guests.

“ 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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