

a brief history of

KW'UMUT LELUM

Kw'umut Lelum has expanded and evolved over the years to become a full-service agency providing child and family services, wellness and cultural supports to lift up Indigenous families and communities.



Our History

In 1994, nine Coast Salish Nations came together with one heart and one mind to take back their inherent right to care for their own children, family and communities.

Daisy Edwards, a Social Development worker at Stz'uminus First Nation, was the contact person for the Ministry of Child and Family Development. Seeing the lack of culturally appropriate care for Indigenous children, she took the first steps on developing a plan to provide services that would effectively support, uplift and empower Indigenous families and communities.

In the first year, Kw'umut Lelum set up an office in the Snaw-Naw-As Community Hall, and engaged the Member Nations and Elders in helping to plan needed services. Executive Director and support staff were hired.

Established in 1994, Kw'umut Lelum's mandate stems from the inherent right of our Nations to protect and care for our children and to ensure every child can thrive, learn and grow in a safe and healthy environment.

By 1996, the group was providing in-home voluntary services for families struggling to provide care; helping build parenting skills based on cultural and community traditions. They developed and implemented the Family Circle approach that involves the entire extended family in resolving issues together. That same year, C3 Delegation was achieved, providing support services for families; voluntary care agreements for children, including temporary in-home care; and special needs agreements, including those for children in care.



In 2001, KL was granted C4 Delegation which included guardianship services (foster care), and permanency planning for children in care. The Le'lumilh Program of caregivers was implemented in the community, along with weekly parenting and play groups. Family Support Workers became Resource Workers, and the focus was on connecting children to their community to develop pride in their roots.

In 2009, the doors opened at Xpey' Lelum, the first of two homes for youth in care needing more stable supports in the community. The First Tribal Journey with KL Canoe Family of paddlers took place, in a dugout canoe created by KL youth the year before. Kevin Frenchy donated the cedar log and Noel Brown carved the canoe, teaching KL youth about the process.

In 2010, KL offices were moved to Snuneymuxw territory and **in 2011**, a satellite office was opened on Penelakut Island. That summer, the KL Canoe Family and dance group performed their protocol in the Swinomish Tribal Journey.

In 2014, KL marked a milestone by achieving C6 Delegated Authority to provide full child safety services to Member First Nations. A ceremony was held to celebrate the success of becoming a fully-delegated organization providing a range of services that included cultural programming for children in care, permanency planning and child safety in the community.

That year, a model longhouse was built with the help of Spirit Works to be the heart of KL's new Four Seasons Cultural Program. This program and Early Years help keep children in care rooted in their community and culture.

In 2015, a new partnership with VIU ensured that children in care had access to the Canada Learning Bond. Under KL guardianship, 20 children born in 2007 or later were signed up to be eligible for government grants and Registered Education Savings Plans to support their future post-secondary learning. VIU also offers a tuition waiver program for children in care to ensure their opportunities for higher education.

"It is important to know who you are and where you come from in order to know where you are going."
- Thiyuas, Florence James



With the acknowledgement that community wellness and family supports were crucial to keeping families together, and preventing children from coming into care, KL launched their Wellness Services division in 2018. A new team of cultural and traditional wellness staff were engaged to provide wraparound supports that incorporate the Coast Salish worldview and culture to promote mental, physical, spiritual and emotional health. This included a uniquely Indigenous approach to supporting independence for youth in care: the Step Up program.

Also in 2018, Kw'umut Lelum successfully advocated to expand services to include Member Nation families living "off-reserve" in the regional districts of Nanaimo and Parksville (Duncan would follow in 2020), and finally being able to support the people of their nine Member Nations regardless of where they reside. Despite the service expansion, and taking on new families previously served by MCFD, KL continued to show a trend of preventing children from coming into care, and keeping them with their families and communities.



As our organization continues to expand into new areas of service, Kw'umut Lelum remains committed to advancing reconciliation, empowering youth, protecting our Nations' rights to self-determination and addressing the ongoing challenges our communities face. We will continue to serve our people in a manner informed by each community's needs and aspirations, with programs and supports rooted in traditional knowledge, culture and values and informed by the ways of our ancestors.

