



NEWS RELEASE

July 9, 2021

Indigenous children and youth express what being Indigenous means to them

Your voice is the song of the river, a song we need to hear."



Annelise, 5 – 2nd Place in Age 5 to 10 Category

<https://youtu.be/3zFl6zpxO2w>

In honor of National Indigenous Peoples Day Monday, June 21, Xyólheméylh held its second annual writing and video contest. Xyólheméylh asked British Columbia Indigenous children and youth to express what being Indigenous means to them in writing and/or video. The entries were judged by a panel consisting of Xyólheméylh's Board of Directors and Elders Advisory Committee, in three categories – ages 5 to 10, ages 11 to 14 and ages 15 to 24.

Children and youth expressed pride in being Indigenous and their connection to culture and nature. They also expressed their sadness about missing and murdered Indigenous women, the impact of residential schools, and their grief about the discovery of unmarked graves at the residential school in Kamloops.

"The entries to our 'What Does Being Indigenous Mean to You' contest are inspiring. Identity, belonging, learning, spirit connections, and family were themes and highlights in the submissions. To those who submitted a written piece or a video, we, the Board of Directors, acknowledge and thank you for your intelligence, creativity, caring

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children & Family Services Society

www.fvacfss.ca



reflections, dancing and showing us who you are and who you aspire to be. Most of all we thank you for inspiring and reminding us to be proud to be Indigenous in all that we do. We are grateful to you as Indigenous youth for sharing your understanding and impressive voices with so many," said Marion Mussell, President of the Xyólheméylh Board of Directors.

Here are a few samples of the winning entries:

"It makes me different than other people and I like being unique."
- Ethan, 10

"We are beautiful, strong, and proud peoples even when we were treated badly by others. That is what being Indigenous means to me."
- Mary Rose, 14

"They don't see Our stolen sisters, where the last time I saw her was on the side of the street on a pole
With the red bolded letters MISSING"
- Leandra, 18

List of all the winners

Age 5 to 10 Category

Ethan, 10
Annelise, 5
Olivia, 8

Age 11 to 14 Category

Mary Rose, 14
Linden, 11
Izabella, 14

Age 15 to 24 Category

Leandra, 18
Elaine, 24
Angie, 16

"We are so proud to read and see the talent of the submissions that were sent to our agency. For all you do and for all you are, we raise our hands to you." Xyólheméylh Executive Leadership Team.



About Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS) is a fully delegated Aboriginal child welfare agency providing culturally appropriate and holistic services through prevention, community development and child welfare programs to Aboriginal (Status, Non-Status, On Reserve, Off Reserve, Stó:lō and other First Nation, Inuit, and Métis) children, youth and their families residing throughout the Fraser Valley.

Our programs and services are created and executed with a special attention on strengthening culture and identity. We focus on keeping families together, reintegrating children back with their families, and discovering and strengthening cultural connections. We work to ensure children are connected to their family, and community while striving to ensure their inherent rights to heritage and identity are upheld in all we do.

LÉTSE MÓT TÉ SQWÁLEWEL – “With a good mind, a good heart, and good feelings”

Contact:

Penny Trites, Executive Director Staff and Community Relations
604-798-1570 / Email: Penny.Trites@xyolhemeylh.bc.ca

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children & Family Services Society

www.fvacfss.ca