

Xyólheméylh

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children & Family Services Society



Annual Report 2021-2022

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Message from the Board of Directors President



On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to tell you about the fiscal year 2021-22. As we entered the second year of the pandemic, we continued to meet virtually and were forced to cancel many of the cultural events and ceremonies that are usually an essential part of what we do as an Indigenous agency.

We were also forced to delay our 2019-20 Annual General Meeting and eventually held it virtually in August, 2021. Our 2020-21 Annual General Meeting was held in December, 2021. I was elected as the new Xyólheméylh Board President as our outgoing President Marion Mussell had completed her two terms. I was Vice President during Marion’s tenure and paid close attention in order to learn how best to fulfill this current role. I am honored to have been mentored by both Marion and previously by Gwen Point. I look forward to working with the Board, the ELT and the communities we serve.

We made significant progress towards our strategic goals this past year, despite challenges presented by the pandemic. The prevention funding Xyólheméylh receives for those living in the Stó:lō communities we serve has made a positive impact. The number of out of care placements has increased by 40 per cent, meaning those children are not in stranger care, and they are living with family in their communities and connected to their culture. There is still so much more to do. We need to see the same prevention funding available to the children, youth, and families we serve who reside off reserve. That is something we are currently advocating for with the Provincial Government.

We want to raise our hands to our Xyólheméylh work family and our Xyólheméylh Síyelyólexwa (Old People/Elders) for their hard work and dedication. We thank our caregivers and parents for supporting our children and youth and we thank the communities we serve and our stakeholders for their continued collaboration. Ey Sqwalewel (with good feeling/heart).

All My Relations,

Ts’qwelemót
Dr. Wenona Hall, Board President
Board of Directors: Dr. Wenona Hall (President), Marion Mussell (Vice-President), Glenda Campbell (Secretary), Jennifer Janik (Treasurer), Tammy Bartz, Peter John, Paula Olmstead, Jolene Irons-McDivitt and Jade Victor.

Message from the Executive Director of Programs



I have had the pleasure of being with Xyólheméylh for more than three years now and am so proud of everyone who makes a positive difference in the lives of the children, families and communities we serve. I’m honoured to work with our staff who work with good hearts, good minds and good feelings and bring dedication and commitment to their roles every-day.

I am grateful to the Elders Advisory Council who share their cultural teachings and wisdom with staff, caregiver support parents, children, youth and families. To our caregiver support parents, thank you for opening your hearts and homes to children, and when possible, including their families as an extension of your own. And to the Stó:lō communities we work with and for, thank you for your collaboration and support.

Since restructuring over two years ago, with an increased focus on strengthening families and establishing a dedicated Stó:lō team that works collaboratively with communities, we have seen exciting and positive outcomes. For the first time we have seen requests for service out number protection reports. These are exactly the outcomes we had hoped for, with families beginning to trust our staff to support them. We have also increased the use of family placements in order to avoid children having to come into the care system in the first place, returning children to family and extended family and ensuring transition processes for youth. We have also increased the implementation of cultural plans for each child to ensure they stay connected to their heritage.

In 2021-22, Xyólheméylh, like every other workplace during the COVID-19 crisis, was dealing with restrictions in terms of the number of staff in the offices, gatherings and meetings and moving to more virtual meetings and visits with families. I am so proud to say that our staff didn’t miss a beat and although there were extensive restrictions to how the work was done, we were able to closely provide the same level of service to our families. It was so encouraging to watch staff being creative in the ways they supported their children, youth and families. We are now returning to normal operations with staff returning to the offices and starting to plan gatherings which we have all missed.

Please read about some of our exciting initiatives in programs in this Annual Report. I would like to thank Rod Spitzig and Penny Trites who I am honoured to work with on the Executive Leadership Team; our wonderful Xyólheméylh staff, Elders and caregiver support parents, as well as the Board of Directors for their support.

Kyla Darby

Message from the Executive Director of Administrative Services



The 2021-22 fiscal year was another trying year that tested the resilience of our staff as we continued to work through the difficult times, we all had to endure. All Xyólheméylh staff continued to work with our H.E.A.R.T core values while adjusting to the continuous changes to the Provincial Health Orders and my hands go up to you all for continuing to do the hard work and supporting our children, youth, families, communities, and especially each other. In my role of Executive Director of Administrative Services (EDOAS), I have the privilege of working with Administration Department, Finance Department, & Human Resources Department. Some of the accomplishments this year are:

During the last fiscal year, the Administrative Services Basket did a review of our Human Resources and Training departments to look at ways to improve the departments so that they can provide greater support to all our Xyólheméylh staff.

The review resulted in adding four new additional positions to the department to support our staff of approximately 280 people. The positions included a Director of Human Resources, Training, & Organizational Development, Recruitment Specialist, Training Team Leader, & Occupational Health & Safety Administrator. To help develop our staff we implemented a new performance coaching/evaluation process looking at both strengths and areas of development of staff.

Our Administrative staff have continued to support our front-line staff, while at the same time managing to keep our vehicles and offices operational as we continued working under the different Provincial Health Orders. We have opened our new Youth Hub Office space in Chilliwack on Main & Wellington, as well as a Family Support Office space in Chilliwack on Main & Spadina. We have secured a new office location in downtown Mission and will be moving in early 2023. We continue to work with communities in the hope of sharing space to help build better relationships and outcomes for our children & families.

The Finance staff continued to provide services while following all Federal, Provincial, and accounting regulations and having a clean financial audit. The use of the Synerion payroll system has helped streamline the payroll process. The Finance Committee has provided great support and want to thank them for their expertise and giving us their valuable time.

I am honored to be the Executive Director of Administrative Service and to support in my work all the Indigenous children and families living within the xáxá témexw té Stó:lō. I could not do this work without the support of all the elders, staff, supervisors, team leaders, managers, directors, and ELT members. I would like to thank the Board of Directors for all of their support, dedication, passion, and leadership in always wanting to make Xyólheméylh better and challenging us to find ways to provide better support to our children, families and communities we work with, while remembering to work LÉTSE MÓT TÉ SQWÁLEWEL - "With a good mind, a good heart, and good feelings"

Sincerely,



Rod Spitzig

Message from the Executive Director of Staff & Community Relations



I have had the honor and privilege of being part of the Xyólheméylh Executive Leadership Team for the past two years. I felt the spirit of a "work family" the second day I walked through the doors. It has been an enormous learning curve with a lot of "why" questions, and continued advocacy for equality for true Indigenous programming and service delivery regardless of where one resides.

The news of the children's bodies recovered in residential school settings opened old wounds for those impacted and awakened the Nation. The recovery triggered a flooding of mixed emotions that shook survivors deeply. The news caused a public dialogue on the shameful and true history of residential schools. We wrapped our

Elders with love in ceremony to give them medicine; to let them know how much we love them, how important they are, and how we need them. Every day Xyólheméylh supports children, youth and families who feel the impacts of residential schools. These tragedies are historical – the legacy is here and now.

The environmental disasters of the Lytton Fire and Sumas flood were absolutely devastating. We witnessed the resiliency of Indigenous peoples who embraced one another with love, compassion, and support. We watched our staff, also very impacted by the traumatic events, work in our organizations H.E.A.R.T values coming together with communities to do the very best service delivery as a team.

Our Elders are involved in all areas of Xyólheméylh, and are so appreciated for all they do. On average we receive seven to 10 Elder referral requests a day. We continue to see relationships with communities, stakeholders and partners move forward in a good way. Having more service requests; people calling and asking for help rather than protection reports is a testament to the work being done.

I would like to acknowledge all our partners; a special thank you to the Stó:lō Nation Chiefs Council, Stó:lō Tribal Council and MNBC for your continued mentorship and support. I extend my sincere appreciation our Board of Directors, Elders and Visions and Voices advisory for your guidance, and the staff and caregiver support parents for your tireless dedication and passion for doing the very best in the roles you fulfill. I also want to thank Rod and Kyla on our ELT for their collaboration and partnership. Thank all of you for being on this journey with us and part of our Xyólheméylh work family.



Penny Trites

Our Vision, Mission & Core Values



Vision

“We advance our inherent right to provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment for all our Indigenous children and families living within our xáxá témexw té Stó:lō.”

Mission

“We endeavor to ensure the safety and well-being of children by working with and supporting all Indigenous families while respecting their cultural diversity.”

Core Values

Honour

We honour generations of diverse traditions and cultures.

Engage

We engage and foster safe family ties and cultural connections in the best interests of the child.

Accountable

We are accountable to children, families, communities, stakeholders and each other.

Respect

We respect our roots in xáxá témexw té Stó:lō and endeavor to provide services and programs that meet the unique cultural needs of all Indigenous people.

Trust

We trust in the ability of our children and families to grow and develop in a healthy way.

Our Elders

Xyólheméylh has an Elders Advisory Committee of Elders representing various First Nations Communities in Stó:lō territory as well some away from home Elders. They ensure we are delivering services in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way.

They meet with social workers and their clients to give recommendations on how the social workers and families can support the children and families in a culturally sensitive way.

In 2020-21 Xyólheméylh continued expanding their role, as well as recruited Elders representing Indigenous groups across Canada, including Cree, Ojibway and Métis. As an agency we serve children and youth from over 130 communities across Canada and into the United States, with over one fifth of our files from the Métis Community. Having Elders on our Advisory council from a variety of Indigenous communities helps ensure that we are doing things in a good way.

The Elders provide healing circles for staff and families, participate in collaborative meetings and advise and lead cultural protocols. They also offer one-on-one and team support.

Our Elder advisory members are an integral part of how we, as an organization, are continuing to move forward in a good way. Our “knowledge keepers” have been an amazing support to our staff and families throughout this year.

We have 18 Elders on our Elders Advisory Council and a number of Elders who are involved in other initiatives with us. Our Elders being

partnered with youth is going well and is continuing to expand. The youth love learning from the Elders.

The Elders teach us that for us to do the very best to serve others, that it starts with each of us reflecting inwardly and taking care of ourselves.

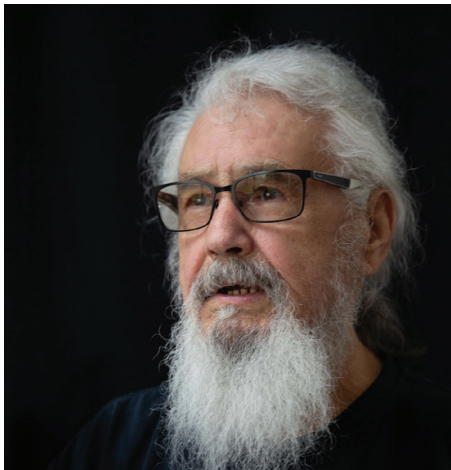
They teach about the importance of living and working in Létsé mót té sqwálewel, with an good mind, a good heart, and good feelings.

They also teach us about taking time to pause and reflect, about the importance of understanding and using our gifts of kindness, sharing, and loving that are within each of us. These gifts are useful, even necessary, to those who are called to the service in helping others.

Thank you to all our 2021-22 Elders Advisory: Laurie Backman; Jeanette Diablo; Julie George; Violet George; Mary Malloway; Roger Andrews; Gil Poitras; Maria Reed; Louise Silver-Kaarsmaker; Donna Simon; Rosemary Treherne; Amy Victor; Allan Mason; Sheree Epp; Leo Nolin; Desta Branham; Darlene Tommy; and Cynthia Myran.

Also thanks to our other Elders: Charles Ayotte; Yvonne Tumangday; Reg Phillips; Ron Penner; Ellery Edel; and Rocky LaRock.

Our Elders Advisory Council



Top row left to right: Amy Victor; Rosemary Trehearne; Laurie Backman; Darlene Tommy, Allan Mason; Donna Simon,

Second Row left to right: Violet George; Mary Malloway; Gil Poitras; Cynthia Myran; Julie George; Leo Nolin.

Third Row left to right: Desta Branham; Louise Silver-Kaarsmaker; Sherry Epp; Maria Reed.

Missing: Roger Andrews, Jeanette Diablo.

Photos by Dan Ludeman

Visions & Voices Youth Advisory Group



The Visions and Voices Youth Mentorship Program was established eight years ago for youth ages 13 and older who have been in care or previously in care with Xyólheméylh. In pre-COVID times the youth travel from across the Fraser Valley to meet monthly. During these meetings they share a meal and plan and organize events. By doing this they build leadership skills as well as connect with their Indigenous culture. The group also acts as an advisory committee for Xyólheméylh, ensuring our programs are responsive to their needs.

Since COVID-19 programs and events have been restricted and mostly virtual. They held a sunflower growing contest with over 120 community members participating. Each participant received a sunflower kit with regular seeds and Giant Mongolian seeds as well as growing tips and fun facts. Participants sent pictures and dozens of prizes were given out including gift cards, craft kits, cultural books, blankets, etc.

The youth also organized several virtual bingo events for youth, staff and elders. Virtual Youth Life Skills group that included Career Planning; Banking Skills; Housing and Resources; Self Care and the Medicine Wheel; and Drivers License and Car Maintenance. They also held a meeting with the Elders Advisory Committee to discuss how both committees can work together on events and programs.

In 2022 they began the process of creating a new role of Youth Programs Coordinator which will eventually be dedicated to coordinating the group. This will allow the group to grow in size and put on more events and consistent programs.



Operations & Programs



Panoramic View of the Fraser Valley

LÉTSÉ MÓT TÉ SQWÁLEWEL

“With a good mind, a good heart,
and good feelings”

Our Organization

Our programs and services are created and delivered with the support of our Elders Advisory Council with special attention on strengthening culture and identity, while honoring the strength of families.

- We strive to work in a holistic way to keep families together and reintegrate children back with their families and extended families.
- Our service delivery is done with an open heart and an open mind focusing on the best interests of the family while keeping children at the center.
- 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.

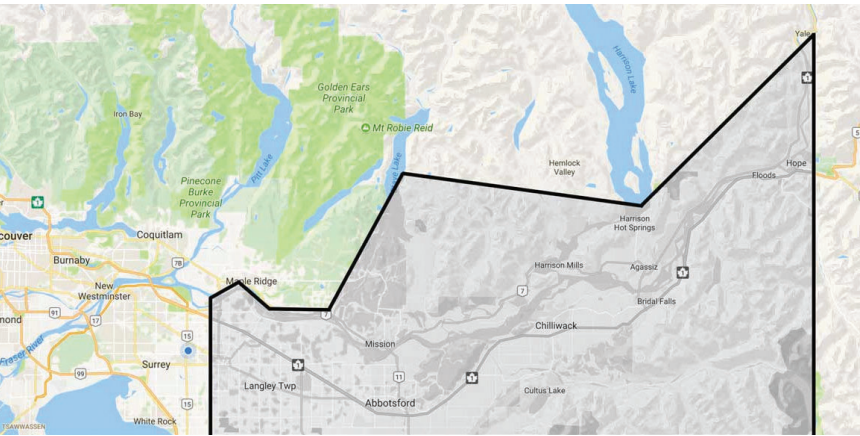
We work with 17 First Nations Bands – Aitchelitz, Chawathil, Cheam, Leq’amel, Matsqui, Popkum, Shxwhá:y, Shxw’ow’hamel,

Skawahlook, Skowkale, Skwah, Soowahlie, Squiala, Sumas, Tzeachten, Yakweakwioose, and Yale First Nations. We also work with urban (away from home) families. In fact, the away from home children, youth and families we are blessed to serve accounts for 85+ per cent of our work.

We operate with offices located in Agassiz, Chilliwack (our head office), Mission, Abbotsford, Langley and Surrey. Currently we have offices in the following Indigenous Communities: Chawathil, Cheam, Leq’amel, Squiala, Shxwhá:y Village and Tzeachten First Nations. We have a goal to have lease agreements in all the Indigenous Communities signed on to be serviced by our organization.

We meet monthly with Designated Representatives for these communities to ensure communities voices are heard. We are signatories in Information sharing agreements with Chiefs from the communities signed on to be served by Xyólheméylh, and the Province so every community knows where their children are in BC.

Our Geographic Service Area



Our Geographic Service Area (GSA) covers Yale to the East, Langley/Surrey Ministry Fraser Region boundary on the West (196th Street), Maple Ridge/ Mission Ministry Fraser Region boundary on the North (Wilson Street) and the Canadian/US border to the South, including the Reserves of Member First Nations, and does not include the Reserves of non-Member First Nations, as set out in the map.

The away from home children, youth and families we are blessed to serve accounts for 85+ per cent of our work. Staff work to ensure that they are following the new Federal Legislation C 92 – *An Act Representing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Children* in planning with these communities. Over 33 per cent of the children, youth, and families we serve are Métis.

A Culturally Vibrant Workplace

Culture is not an afterthought... it is in all we do. In 2021 we established a Board Cultural Advisory Committee to be the governance oversight ensuring culture is at the center of all we do. The Board Cultural Advisory committee is comprised of Board Directors, Elders and the Executive Director of Staff and Community Relations are currently working on a cultural protocol for Xyólheméylh that includes a series of cultural training videos. In terms of training, more and more staff have taken the five week cultural safety training course. The goal is that all staff will have completed the training.

Elders also play an essential role in creating a culturally vibrant workplace, they meet with staff one-on-one or in teams and provide advice, guidance and healing from workplace trauma.

We continued to enhance our office spaces with art and Indigenous music. It is important for us to distinguish ourselves as an Indigenous agency, as well as to provide culturally safe places for Indigenous families to visit.

Honouring Our Elders: the 215+ lives that mattered



“Our prayers don’t know distance or time, spirit doesn’t know distance or time,” said Grand Chief Doug Kelly, addressing the Xyólheméylh staff, board members and Elders who gathered at two ceremonies on June 4th. The ceremonies were to honor the agency Elders to give them love and medicine, and to honor the 215+ children who were recovered at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

The morning ceremony was held at the site of St. Mary’s residential school in Mission, and the afternoon ceremony was held at Coqualeetza in Chilliwack, also the site of a former residential school and a tuberculosis hospital.

The ceremonies were also held to honor the Elders as survivors and to hold a blanketing ceremony. “The Elders have taught us about the power of belief, and that there is medicine in our prayers,” said Grand Chief Doug Kelly. He also urged attendees to: “Combat hate with love, and combat lies with truth.”

Our Organization (Continued)

Infrastructure

In 2021 we moved out of our headquarters in Building 1 as it was scheduled for demolition. Some staff moved into office space in Stó:lō Service Agency Building. Building 1 was eventually demolished in April 2022.

We are very proud of two new office locations we have just opened to continue to work towards the best service delivery we can for those we serve. We opened a Space on Spadina in Chilliwack next to the Pharmasave on Spadina and Main Street. This office is down the street from our Youth Hub and is a place where families can receive wrap around supports. We will be liaising with our partners at Fraser Health, FNHA and Stó:lō Health as we have two offices for external partners to lease. Our goal is to have counsellors and a nurse practitioner on site at a minimum. There is an Elder’s area, as well space for staff to and families to talk to our Elders.

In addition to the Space on Spadina, we have just signed a lease with Shx’w̓ha:yVillage. Our goal is to eventually be in all 17 communities we serve.

Renovations are underway for a new office in Mission that will be completed this year. After this move this means our agency will no longer occupy any spaces in former Residential Schools.

We are currently meeting with architects and have the preliminary drawings completed for a new building on Coqualeetza Property.

COVID-19

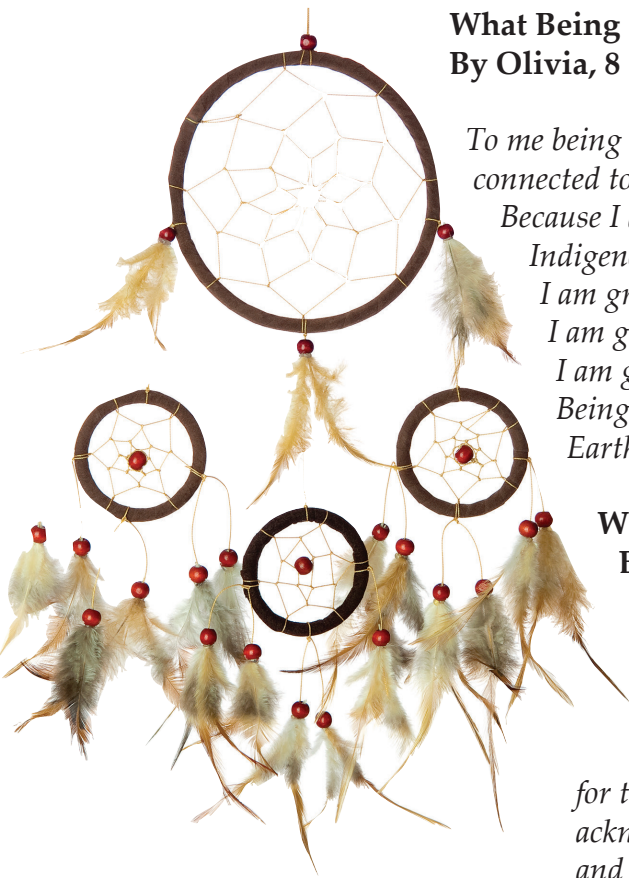
At our April 12, 2022 Board meeting, the Directors voted to suspend our current Vaccination Policy and immediately begin working on amendments. While the policy is suspended we can no longer require vaccination status be provided by staff, however we do encourage staff to continue to do so as this information helps us ensure our policy (in the event it needs to be reinstated given the forever changing landscape of the COVID virus) is meeting the safety needs of our staff.



Virtual Staff Christmas Party, December 2021.

Voices of Children & Youth

To celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day June 21, 2021 we asked Indigenous youth in BC to express what being Indigenous means to them. Here are just a few of the wonderful submissions we received.



What Being Indigenous Means to Me By Olivia, 8

To me being Indigenous means having a beautiful culture and being connected to nature.
Because I am Indigenous I feel special because not everybody is Indigenous.
I am grateful for Mother Earth because she gives us life.
I am grateful for the animals because they give us food.
I am grateful for the sun because it helps grow plants.
Being Indigenous means we only take what we need from Mother Earth.

What Does Being Indigenous Mean to You? By Izabella, 14

What does being indigenous mean to me?
it means remembering two hundred and fifteen
it means shedding a tear
for those who are no longer here
acknowledging the lives lived on the land before me
and the bones of your ancestors beneath your feet

My Sight Is Sacred By Leandra,18

My sight is sacred, from the deep wounded slashes in my forefathers back
To the whip marks in my grandmothers’ wrists and the pain that follows from generation to generation
Every bit of me is sacred my mother would say:
they don’t understand what these eyes see
From the pain in our mothers’ eyes
To the concrete ground that brought scabby knees and wounded elbows in our child times
When my grandmother would say “That. That used to be ours” and that ground would never hurt you the way
It does now

Community Profile: Leq'a:mel First Nation



Pictured above: Chief Alice Thompson, Jason Thompson, Victoria L'Hirondelle, Dawn Styran

Leq'a:mel First Nation is located 22 kilometers east of Mission and 25 kilometers west of Agassiz.

Led by Chief Alice Thompson and six Councillors, the First Nation has 600 members and is a signatory to the Stó:lō Nation. Their goal is to develop more sustainability within the community and offer more services and supports in house.

Leq'a:mel First Nation is undertaking initiatives to look at the impacts of COVID on mental health, and specifically, "giving the kids a break away from their parents and grandparents, as well as giving the parents a break," says Alice.

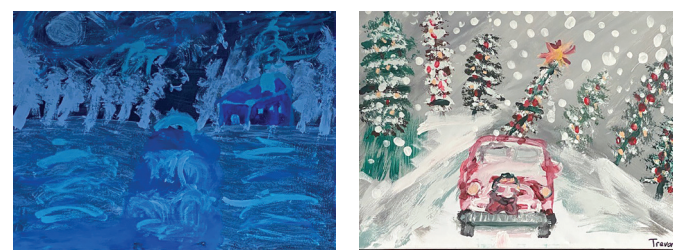
"Our families are very resilient and very strong and we are working on strategies to enhance the strengths they already have," says Dawn Styran, Councillor and Designated Band Rep, who adds that it's one of her goals to work herself out of a job.

Voices of Children & Youth



Last spring we asked BC Indigenous children and youth what they were grateful for and to express it in art. We received so many wonderful submissions expressing gratitude for nature, pets, family, sports and even ice cream. The winners art was on exhibit at the Cottonwood Centre in Chilliwack in the winter of 2021. We would like to thank the Chilliwack Community Arts Council and the Cottonwood Centre for organizing the exhibit.

Christmas Card Contest



Left to Right: Colby, 12 and Trevor, 13

Xyólheméylh held a Christmas card contest. A panel of our Board Members and Elders Advisory Council chose the above submissions by Colby, 12 and Trevor, 13.

Voices of Children & Youth



Colette, 13 (First Place (Age 12 to 19 Category))

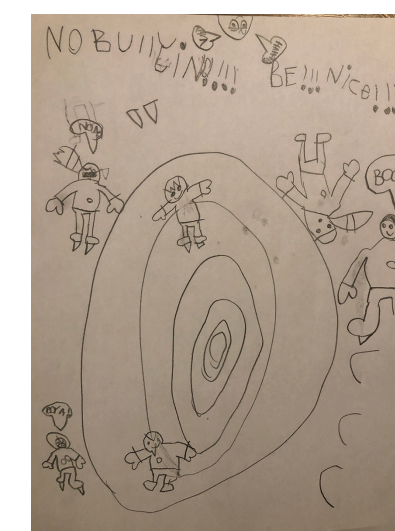
Pink Shirt Day

In February of 2021, we asked Indigenous children and youth in British Columbia to tell us how they stand up with kindness and lift others up. They told us in writing, songs, videos and art. We received over 50 submissions and the winners were chosen by a panel of Elder advisors and Board members.

The children and youth expressed the importance of not tolerating bullying, of being

inclusive, and looking out for each other. "The entries show that the message of being kind and lifting each other up is really getting through to children and youth," said Dr. Wenona Hall, President of the Xyólheméylh's Board of Directors. "That is very beautiful and encouraging."

"We want to express our gratitude to all the children and youth who submitted their art, as well as the teachers who helped facilitate the contest by using it as a classroom project," said Penny Trites, Xyólheméylh's Executive Director of Staff and Community Relations. "It was truly inspiring."



Above: Dylan, 9 (First Place, Age 7 to 9 Category); Left: Ben, 4 (First Place, Age 2 to 6 Category)

Our Programs

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention and early intervention continue to be the forefront of practice for our staff. In late 2021, Xyólheméylh launched its practice framework entitled *“Indigenous Collaborative Practice Model: Creating Safety, Family and Cultural Connections through Collaboration.”* The guide was developed by a working group which consisted of Elders, agency leadership and front-line staff.

The purpose of the framework is to guide staff through the life span of a file and ensure that we are working collaboratively with family and community at each step. The guide marries the policy and practice standards that our staff must follow, while enabling Indigenous children, families, and communities to lead and develop plans for their future.

This model relies on a fundamental element of Indigenous practice, the circle process. This process is strengths-based, holistic and speaks of the vital importance of strengthening relationships through sharing, collaborating, and striving for consensus in collective decision making. Through early 2022 staff will continue to be oriented on the guide as we implement it as the focus for Xyólheméylh.

The collaborative practice framework goes hand in hand with Xyólheméylh’s increase in out of care placements. When a child must come out of their parental home for any number of reasons, we are striving to ensure that we are placing with family or community whenever possible.

Xyólheméylh is working diligently to support our out of care caregivers and families to support children remaining out of stranger care placements. We have seen lots of success in this area recently and will continue to ensure family is at the fore front of our decision making.

Our out of care stats, meaning children and youth who are out of the parental home are with family, in community and connected to their culture is up 42 per cent from this time last year. We are proud of how the families, Elders, staff, and communities are coming together to come up with plans to prevent children and youth from going into stranger care.

We are continuing to advocate for substantive equality; in particular equality of prevention services regardless of where someone resides.

Our leadership team met and identified the five key areas of substantive equality being part of a Delegated Aboriginal Agency that was built under a colonial model. We will be going to Provincial office this spring to present on substantive equality. We are working on a plan so as an agency we will be responsible for all the service lines that are currently being delivered by our partners at MCFD and have Elders providing guidance for the services being delivered in these key areas.

Designated Representatives

Each month there is a call for our Nation Designated Representatives. In addition to the Designated Representatives attending, several Nation Chiefs, Care Committee members,

support workers and Nation Matriarchs attend these virtual meetings. It is a great platform where Nation updates are given, agency updates, trainings and guest presentations are delivered. These calls are for the Nations who receive services in their communities by Xyólheméylh.



Keith Point at Setting The Table: In lieu of our annual overnight cultural camps, we held several afternoon events called Setting The Table where we shared a meal and teachings during the summer of 2021

Meet a Caregiver: Mark and Lisa Friesen



Mark and Lisa Friesen started foster parenting with Xyólheméylh 27 years ago when they welcomed a sibling group of three to join their household of three daughters. Looking back at those early years, Lisa laughs at the fact

that both she and Mark were not even 30 years-old and the ages of their children were 4,5,6,7,8 and 9. It was a busy and fun filled home as the children stayed long term and are considered family today. In fact, one individual with special needs continues to live as an adult with Mark and Lisa.

As the children grew and moved on their own, an additional three children came into their home over time and all are considered family. For the Friesens, foster parenting doesn’t end when children leave.

Lisa’s value and conviction for caring for children, families and community stem from her Secwepmec teachings and faith in the Creator. Additionally, Lisa’s mom attended the Kamloops Residential School and passed on the importance of supporting and nurturing children and families through difficult times.

National Day of Truth & Reconciliation



Xyólheméylh staff observed the first Truth and Reconciliation Day by attending events across the lower mainland and Fraser Valley. The photo above was taken at the site of the former Coqualeetza residential school in Chilliwack to unveil a carved pole by Yakwekwioose First Nations Chief and artist, Terry Horne (Siyemches). There was a ceremony earlier in the day to commemorate another pole carved by Chief Horne at the site of the former St. Mary's Residential School on the Pkw'Xe:yles First Nation in Mission. The poles commemorate the children who died and were lost at the schools as well as the survivors and their families. The ceremony also marked the beginning of the important and sacred work of searching for unmarked grave locations in the Fraser Valley.

On the Coqualeetza pole, the children and the woman are all wrapped in blankets. At the one in Mission the children are wearing residential school uniforms.

Our Programs (Continued)

Our Caregiver Support Parents

We are enormously grateful for our Xyólheméylh Caregiver Support parents who open their homes and hearts to children and youth who need them. They provide love, nurturing, structure, stability while working with the child's care team to ensure the children's needs are met. In 2021-22 we had planned an honouring ceremony to show our support but it was cancelled due to COVID-19. Instead, the staff hand delivered gifts to their homes.

Many caregiver support parents attended virtual training with Sandy Balascak. The training is called the Whyse Approach and focuses on helping at risk youth and understanding trauma and toxic stress. As Sandy says: "There is no such thing as problem youth, just youth with problems."

Another workshop we offered, in partnership with Archway, was called Adolescence: Embracing the Transitional Years, focused on learning about adolescent development and how to support teens through the aging-out process.

Many of our caregivers have told us that only other caregivers know and understand what they go through on a day-to-day basis. So, we introduced Caregiver Networks in conjunction with MCFD and held several online gatherings to introduce the project to caregivers.

Journey Around the Medicine Wheel with Earl Lambert



Youth participated in an innovative 12-week virtual workshop, called Journey Around the Medicine Wheel, that Xyólheméylh organized for Indigenous youth in the spring of 2021.

Earl Lambert is a Cree Metis warrior, a successful entrepreneur, motivational speaker and inspirational storyteller. He uses music, magic, hip hop and humour in his workshops. His own story as a child in care and as an incarcerated youth is also inspiring and allows him to connect with the youth in an empathetic and compassionate way.

Through a series of 12 virtual presentations youth participants embarked upon a journey around the Medicine Wheel, which was used as a catalyst for sharing rich cultural teachings. In each virtual session, the youth participants learned ways they can honor themselves as a whole - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually - to create a recipe for living a healthy, balanced life.

Topics covered over the course of the 12-week program included Positive Communication Skills; Confidence & Self Esteem; Leadership; Addictions; Indigenous History (with assistance

of local Elders & knowledge keepers); Grief & Loss; Healthy Sexuality; the Power of Education; Physical Health & Well-Being; Emotional Well-ness; Life Planning & Goal Setting; and Spirituality.

Some of the words used by the youth to describe the workshops included: "spectacular" "helpful" "inspirational" and "encouraging." For some of the youth the workshop has been life changing. Earl says the youth have improved at school, achieved employment, improved their relationships and accomplished some of their health goals. One youth said she was getting up every morning and doing three hours of homework. Another said prior to the workshop she felt like giving up and that now she wants to keep going.

"I find once you tap into their gifts, they will have the drive and motivation," says Earl.

Earl feels it's very important for Indigenous youth to learn how to communicate and be assertive in a calm way, particularly because Indigenous people lost their voice for so long. "Your voice is sacred. You are worth getting your needs met," Earl tells the youth.

That is not to say that the workshops are without their challenges. For example, there are challenges working with teenagers who can be emotionally disconnected or have trouble paying attention, in addition to the technical issues presented with a platform such as Zoom. Also, the number of participants fluctuated from week to week as some of the youth had other commitments, such as jobs or some were simply burnt out with the virtual world.

Caseloads - 2020-22

On Reserve Files Count Team 1

First Nation	Year	FS	FDR	SR	In Care	OOC-CS	YAG	EFP	Total
Leq'a:mel	2020-21	6	9	3	0	0	0	0	18
Leq'a:mel	2021-22	9	1	11	4	4	0	0	29
Matsqui	2020-21	3	3	3	4	0	0	0	13
Matsqui	2021-22	5	5	8	4	2	0	0	24
Sumas	2020-21	4	6	0	3	3	0	0	16
Sumas	2021-22	9	6	5	6	2	2	0	30
Shxwha:y Village	2020-21	5	7	2	16	1	0	0	31
Shxwha:y Village	2021-22	3	5	4	4	0	0	0	16
Aitchelitz	2020-21	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Aitchelitz	2021-22	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	7
Soowahlie	2020-21	3	4	3	0	1	0	4	15
Soowahlie	2021-22	3	6	4	7	5	0	2	27
Squiala	2020-21	1	1	3	0	3	0	3	11
Squiala	2021-22	2	4	7	0	0	0	1	14
Skowkale	2020-21	0	8	1	4	0	1	0	14
Skowkale	2021-22	5	5	4	2	0	0	2	18
Tzeachten	2020-21	3	8	1	3	0	0	0	16
Tzeachten	2021-22	6	1	5	2	0	0	3	17
Yakweakwioose	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yakweakwioose	2021-22	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
Total Files	2020-21	25	46	18	30	8	1	7	135
Total Files	2021-22	45	36	52	29	13	2	9	186

FS

FDR

SR

OOC-CS

YAG

EFP

Family Services

Family Development Response

Voluntary Service Request

Out of Care Child Services

Youth Agreement

Extended Family Plan

Caseloads - 2020-22

On Reserve Files Count Team 2

First Nation	Year	FS	FDR	SR	In Care	OOC-CS	YAG	EFP	Total
Skwah	2020-21	7	7	3	4	0	1	2	24
Skwah	2021-22	7	10	12	4	3	0	1	37
Cheam	2020-21	7	5	5	11	1	0	3	32
Cheam	2021-22	6	4	9	12	5	1	2	39
Chawathil	2020-21	7	16	7	14	0	3	2	49
Chawathil	2021-22	11	22	2	7	4	2	7	55
Skawahlook	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skawahlook	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yale	2020-21	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	4
Yale	2021-22	2	1	1	2	0	0	3	9
Shxw'owhamel	2020-21	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Shxw'owhamel	2021-22	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	6
Popkum	2020-21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Popkum	2021-22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Files	2020-21	22	33	17	29	1	4	7	113
Total Files	2021-22	26	40	25	27	12	3	13	146

Off Reserve Files

Year	FS	FDR	SR	In Care	OOC-CS	YAG	EFP	Total
2020-21	320	305	551	369	62	42	76	1725
2021-22	341	292	534	371	62	33	47	1680

Looking Ahead

Our goals for 2022 - 2023 are:

1) Ensuring a Culturally Vibrant Workplace

This includes initiatives to expand and strengthen the role of Elders, developing strategies for youth/Elder engagement, enriching cultural teachings internally, ensuring our offices physically reflect Indigenous culture, and increasing morale and a sense of belonging with staff.

2) Sound Human Resources process and procedures

This includes reviewing HR policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date, reviewing the on-boarding process and ensuring the process involves cultural protocols and teachings.

3) A Place where employees are engaged, make a difference and are accountable

This includes improving internal communication with staff, staff recognition, and appreciation, training, establishing Wellness Committees, and improving our performance management and evaluation procedures. It also includes developing a facilities strategic plan.

4) Sound Financial Management and Reporting

We will be reviewing our Finance Policies to ensure they are up to date and implementing a new ADP Payroll System

5) Building and Strengthening relationships with communities

We have information sharing agreements and are working towards Community Walking Together Protocols with the communities we serve. Partnering with community organizations to develop an urban strategy for away from home children, youth and families we serve is very important, communities, and improving how as well as how we support and communicate with Caregiver Support Parents.

6) Strengthen and ensure culturally relevant practice and delegated programs that are compliant with standards

This includes increased use of prevention services and family strengthening meetings; increased support to families for children to remain safely with their families; increased use of out of care options; ensuring permanency plans for Children and Youth in Care (CYIC) are at the forefront of planning; increased support for youth transitioning out of care; increased support for caregivers; and increased focus on culture and accessing the knowledge of Elders.

7) Enhance and ensure family strengthening programs are culturally relevant and promote family and community involvement.

This includes ensuring that collaborative practices are embedded in all basket practice; ensuring culture is incorporated into the work of our teams with families; and that Elders and Youth voices are included in programming.



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Létsé mót té sqwálewel ...

With a good mind, a good heart, and good feelings"