



# Xyólheméyhlh Annual Report 2024-25

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society



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# Vision, Mission and Core Values

Our vision is to advance our inherent right to provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment for all our Indigenous children within our Stó:lô xaxa temexw. Our H.E.A.R.T. values help us realize this vision.

## Vision

Healthy and safe families

## Mission

We support Indigenous families and communities to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children while respecting cultural diversity.

## Core Values

**H**onour - *S'olhstexw*  
We honour generations of diverse traditions and cultures.

**E**ngage - *Lexws'ó:les qas Yóyestel (Working together)*  
We engage and foster safe family ties and cultural connections in the best interests of the child.

**A**ccountable - *Telómelthet (Acknowledge)*  
We are accountable to children, families, communities, stakeholders and each other.

**R**espect - *Ólhet (Respect someone)*  
We respect our roots in xáxá témexw té Stó:lô and endeavor to provide services and programs that meet the unique cultural needs of all Indigenous people.

**T**rust - *Q'élmet*  
We trust in the ability of our children and families to grow and develop in a healthy way.



# Strategic Goals

## Board Governance Goals



1

Continue to practice good governance.

2

Maintain accountability of the ELT through building relationships and collaboration.

3

Strengthen Board visibility and relations throughout Xyólheméylh and communities.

## Operational Goals



1

Support closing the socio-economic gap for Indigenous communities and families.

2

Ensure adequate, feasible and long-term organizational facilities.

3

Ensure agency practice adheres to standards and exceeds community needs.

4

Ensure a culturally aware workplace.

5

Cultivate an organizational framework that is supported and sustainable.



# About Us

17

Number of Stó:lō First Nation Communities we serve

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 centre.
- 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 Communities –

- Athelets (Atchelitz);
- Xwchíyò:m (Cheam);
- Chowéthel (Chawathil);
- Leq’á:mel;
- Máthexwi (Matsqui);
- Pópkw’em (Popkum);
- Sxwoyehà:là (Squiala);
- Shxwhá:y (Skway);
- Sxwoyehá:lá (Shxw’ow’hamel);
- Sq’ewá:lxw (Skawahlook);
- Sq’ewqeyl (Skowkale);
- Sqwá (Skwah);
- Th’ewá:li (Soowahlie);
- Semá:th (Sumas);
- Ch’iyáqtel (Tzeachten);
- Yeqwyeqwi:ws (Yakwekwioose); and
- Xwoxwelá:lhq (Yale).

We also work with Láts’elmexw (away from home) families. In fact, the away from home children, youth and families we serve accounts

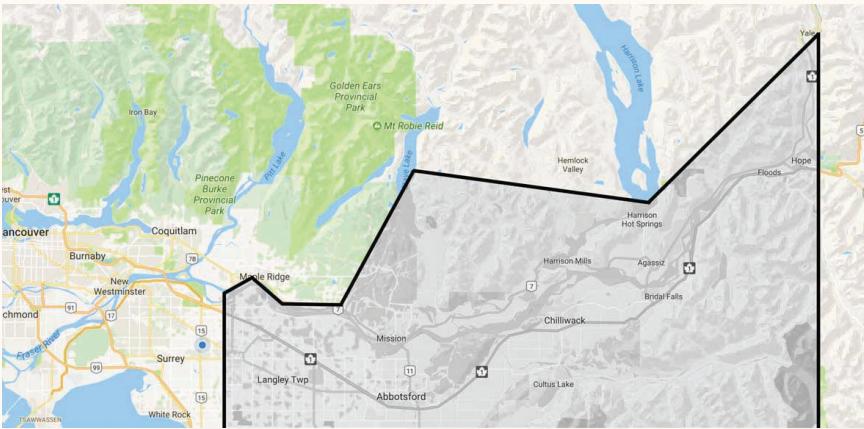
for over 85 per cent of our work. Over 33 per cent of the children, youth, and families we serve are Métis.

We operate with offices located in Agassiz, Chilliwack (our head office), Mission, Abbotsford, Langley and Surrey. Currently we have offices in the following Stó:lō Communities: Chowéthel , Xwchíyò:m, Sxwoyehà:là, Shxwhá:y Village and Ch’iyáqtel First Nations. Our goal is to have lease agreements in all the Stó:lō Communities signed on to be serviced by our organization.

During the 2024–2025 fiscal year, our workforce continued to grow, reaching a total of 338 employees by year-end — representing a nine per cent increase despite the closure of our Surrey operations on March 31, 2025.

Our employee turnover rate saw a modest rise to 8.6 per cent, largely influenced by the Surrey office closure. Nevertheless, our overall employee retention rate continues to trend up-ward, currently standing at 86 per cent.

As part of our ongoing efforts to gather accurate demographic data, current records indicate that 31.25 per cent of our workforce either hold Indigenous status or have self-identified as Indigenous.



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.



# About Us

338

Number of Staff

This data is significant, as one of the key recommendations from our Elders Advisory Council and Board [AC1.1] is to increase the presence and representation of Indigenous peoples across Xyólheméylh. This remains a priority in our continued commitment to reconciliation, cultural safety, and organizational inclusion.

31.25%

Percentage of Staff who are Indigenous

This year, we deepened our commitment to staff development by expanding our training and educational offerings. Building on foundational programs, we introduced new modules and refreshers in key areas such as Clinical Supervision, Court Skills, Care Planning, and Re-Wrapping Our Families. These initiatives reflect our ongoing efforts to equip staff with the tools and knowledge they need to serve children and families with confidence and care.

86%

Percentage of Staff Retention

A significant milestone was the launch of a pilot Cultural Training Program developed by the Xyólheméylh Cultural Advisory Committee. This committee, composed of community members, Elders, board members, and staff, began its work in June 2022 with the goal of co-creating a guide rooted in cultural knowledge. The resulting five-module training honours and uplifts Stó:lō ways of being and knowing, with an emphasis on oral teachings—an essential element in how knowledge is shared and passed down through generations.

Human Resources also continued its intentional journey toward decolonizing workplace practices. In partnership with our Elders team, we introduced new ‘Guidelines for Elders Attending HR and Employee Meetings’. These guidelines aim to create space for cultural inclusion by welcoming Elders and Knowledge Keepers into our processes, recognizing the vital role they play in offering wisdom, grounding, and relational balance.

Our efforts this year reflect a broader shift within the organization: embedding cultural safety, equity, and inclusion across all areas of our work. This commitment continues to shape how we grow and serve the communities we walk alongside.



Top to Bottom: Cultural Training with Chief Darcy; Surrey Closing Appreciation Ceremony, April 3, 2025; Staff Appreciation, April, 2024.





# Board of Directors President

*The Board of Directors - L-R Top to Bottom: President: Wásems 'íksduqwia – Angelina Bowen; Vice-President: Joshua Bailey; Treasurer: Brooke Metchewais; Secretary: Marcella Sunshine; Marion Mussell; Wab'shkaan E'quet E'kway – Kelowa Edel; XaXa Moqw – Peter John; Salacy-a-til – Phil Hall; Che'lotsowe't – Glenda Campbell.*

We are committed to partnering and collaborating with our community partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the families we are privileged to work with. We recognize that Indigenous culture is healing and we strive to develop programming and services that will connect children and families to their culture.


The Xyólheméylh Board of Directors was focused on building relationships with our partners in 2024-25. We met with the Stó:lō communities we serve to listen to their concerns and ideas. These meetings have been very productive and creative. We also met with Xyólheméylh's Elders Advisory to listen to their ideas. We value the wisdom and experience of our knowledge keepers.

In March 2024 we held an Extraordinary Annual General Meeting. After months of engagement with the communities we serve, our Bylaw Committee proposed a package of bylaw amendments intended to improve Xyólheméylh's governance. Our members voted to approve the amendments and notable changes included:

- Increasing general meeting quorum from 5 to 18 members;
- Clarifying director qualification criteria and term limits;
- Improvements to Board and Committee governance and transparency;
- Allowing Xyólheméylh to hold fully or partially electronic general meetings.

The Board would like to thank the Executive Leadership Team and the dedicated staff and Elders of Xyólheméylh as we continue to expand on the vision of the founders with a clear focus on growing prevention services.

Kw'as hó:y,



Wásems 'íksduqwia - Angelina Bowen, President, Xyólheméylh-Board of Directors





# Executive Director of Programs



As the Interim Executive Director Programs since June 2025, I am pleased to report on the highlights in Programs throughout 2024-25.

In support of the strategic goal to ensure agency practices adhere to standards and exceeds community needs we:

- worked to increase the number of children placed with extended family instead of “in care” if they have to leave their family home;
- ensured post majority youth services were developed and consistently delivered;
- decreased inequity in financial supports for “out of care” families;
- continued to advocate for prevention funding for Látsu:mexw (away from home) Indigenous people in our geographic service area.

Last spring we made the difficult decision to end our contract with Circle 5 in Surrey effective March 31, 2025. The decision was made to refocus our staffing support and resources for children and families within our Geographic Service Area. We worked with the union to ensure all staff were supported and had options with employment within Xyólheméylh. On April 3 we held an honouring ceremony to honour our partnership with Circle 5 and to celebrate the social workers who worked in Surrey over the years. We want to thank everyone who has worked in Surrey over the years for their dedication and the contributions they made.

I am grateful for the support of the Stó:lō communities we serve and thank them for their support and willingness to walk alongside us. Thank you to the Board of Directors and my colleagues on the Executive Leadership Team for their support. Thank you to our Elders who share their wisdom with us and thank you to our dedicated staff. I am very privileged to work with a team of people who are committed to making positive change in the lives of the children, youth and families we serve.

Laura-Dawn Wilkin  
Executive Director of Programs

# Executive Director of Administrative Services



I am honoured to be responsible for Xyólheméylh’s Administration, Human Resources and Finance teams. We made significant progress towards advancing our strategic goals in 2024-25 and I am pleased to report on them.

To support the goal of closing the soci-economic gap for Indigenous children and families, we conducted a review of alternative funding sources and will be hiring a writer/researcher to focus on obtaining grants.

In support of the strategic goal to ensure adequate, feasible and long-term organizational facilities, we are tracking and reviewing our lease agreements with First Nations communities and exploring additional on-Reserve office space lease opportunities. We have also developed short and long-term facilities plans and are exploring opportunities to build a new head office On Reserve by partnering with one or more First Nations communities.

Our Finance Department reviewed and updated our Finance Policies to ensure we have a clean financial audit and are following federal, provincial and accounting regulations. Our Human Resources Department conducted a review of Occupational Health and Safety at our events, continued the process of Indigenizing our interviewing and hiring practices and established a new Cultural Safety Training Program. They also worked on a succession planning model, as well as worked on recruitment and retention. Our administrative staff have an important role in supporting social workers and family strengthening staff in their work and ensuring our offices are welcoming spaces for staff, children and families.

I would like to thank our dedicated and hardworking staff, our wise Elders who share their knowledge, and my colleagues on the Executive Leadership Team. I would also like to thank the Board of Directors for their support and leadership. I am very honored and privileged to live and work within the Xáxá témexw té Stó:lō and to be able to support Indigenous children, youth and families.

Rod Spitzig  
Executive Director of Administrative Services



# Executive Director of Staff & Community Relations



As the Interim Executive Director of Staff and Community Relations since June 2025, a role previously held by Laura-Dawn Wilkin, it is my privilege to report on the highlights over the past year.

- Creating an Urban Community Relations Team;
- Hiring a Communications Director to oversee the Events and Communications initiatives;
- Developing community protocols with member First Nations;
- Assessing our current relationships for the Urban Community Engagement and Partnership Strategy;
- Introducing All Staff Virtual Meetings on a bi-annual basis.

Supporting the goal of ensuring a culturally aware workplace, we completed the Cultural Guide and completed a calendar of orientation sessions for staff. We anticipate that by October 2025 that 15 sessions with staff will be completed.

Every Spring we hold a Staff Appreciation Event which is dedicated to honoring and celebrating the incredible contributions of all our staff members who have helped shape the success of our organization.

In 2025 we celebrated staff at Shxw̓ha:y Cultural Centre on May 8. Going forward we will also be inviting our retired staff to join us. It will be an opportunity for staff to reconnect with former colleagues and for us to show our appreciation for their contributions to our organization.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their support, our wonderful Elders and our amazing staff for their contributions. I would also like to thank the Stó:lō communities for their support and being dedicated and collaborative partners.

*J. Galis*

Shoy:etelwet, Memia:ia, Qwa kwiih̓ maat, T̓ ɫalikil̓a'yug wa Terresa Galis  
Executive Director of Staff and Community Relations

# Our Elders - SI:YÓLEXWE

Xyólheméylh has an Elders Advisory Committee which has representatives from the First Nations communities in Stó:lō territory, as well as away from home Indigenous communities across Canada. They ensure we are delivering services in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way.

Elders are embedded in all aspects of operations. They offer recommendations and guidance on policy and practice to staff and leadership. They also provide input and evaluation of services around the role of culture in day-to-day operations. Elders play an important role in training and lead in offering healing through traditional ways of dealing with stress and grief.

Elders play a major role in services through their participation in all collaborative practice circles and direct support to staff, youth and families. We also have Elders who support our Sq'epqotel Court Project, which sees Elders attending court to support families involved in the Family Court system.

We have 19 Elders on our Elders Advisory Council and five Auxiliary Elders who are involved in specific projects. We would like to thank the New Relationship Trust which made our annual Elders Conference possible. Here are some of the highlights for 2024-25:

- Xyólheméylh holds a Memorandum of Understanding with Archway Community Services to provide culturally sensitive services to Indigenous clients. This includes consulting with Elders. In 2024-25, Elders attended Archway and the Foundry, on 41 occasions.
- Elders attended 157 Family Conference Planning Circles;
- Elders attended 76 Family Group Circles;
- Elders attended 42 one on one staff support meetings;
- Elders attended 87 one on one client support meetings;

19

Number of Elders on Elders Advisory Committee

157

Number of Family Conference Planning Circles that Elders attended

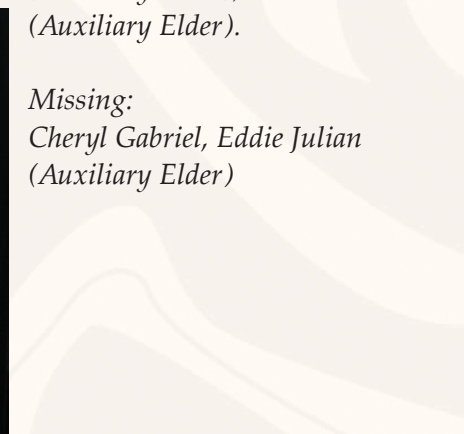
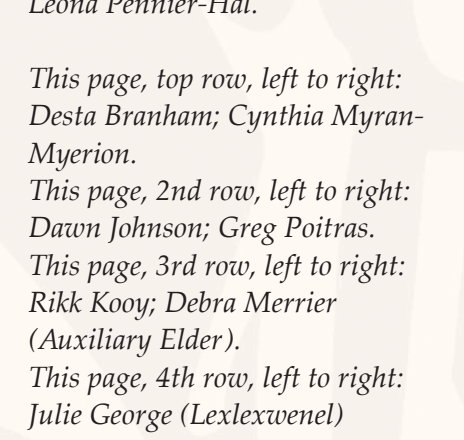
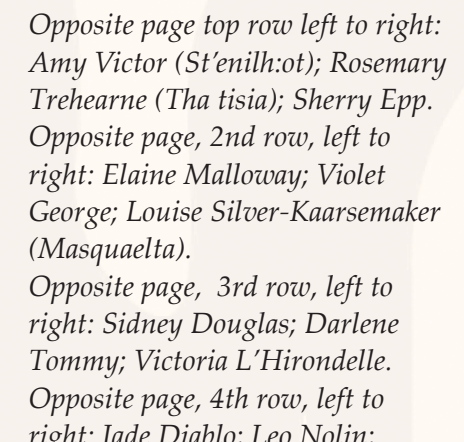
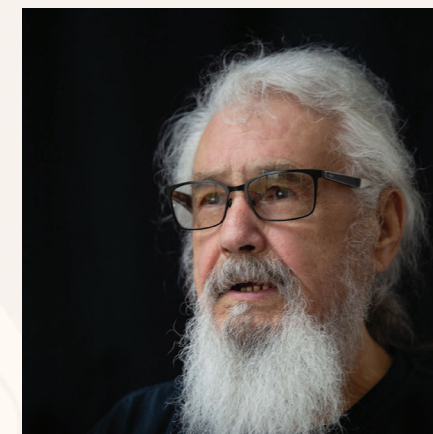
87

Number of One on One Client Support Requests

18

Number of Healing Circles facilitated by Elders





Opposite page top row left to right: Amy Victor (St'enilh:ot); Rosemary Trehearne (Tha tisia); Sherry Epp. Opposite page, 2nd row, left to right: Elaine Malloway; Violet George; Louise Silver-Kaarsemaker (Masquaelta). Opposite page, 3rd row, left to right: Sidney Douglas; Darlene Tommy; Victoria L'Hirondelle. Opposite page, 4th row, left to right: Jade Diablo; Leo Nolin; Leona Pennier-Hal.

This page, top row, left to right: Desta Branham; Cynthia Myran-Myerion. This page, 2nd row, left to right: Dawn Johnson; Greg Poitras. This page, 3rd row, left to right: Rikk Kooy; Debra Merrier (Auxiliary Elder). This page, 4th row, left to right: Julie George (Lexlexwenel) (Auxiliary Elder); Allan Mason (Auxiliary Elder).

Missing: Cheryl Gabriel, Eddie Julian (Auxiliary Elder)



## Meet an Elder: Victoria L'Hirondelle



Victoria L'Hirondelle's journey has made her uniquely qualified to be an Elder with Xyólheméylh. In her role as an Indigenous EA with the Chilliwack School District for 27 years, she has made a huge difference in the lives of so many children and families. As a child of the Sixties Scoop, she also knows what it means to be in foster care, separated from her parents and her culture. "I can identify with a lot parents who have lost their kids and I can identify with the kids who still want to be with their parents," says Victoria.

Victoria parents were Cree from the Sawridge and Enoch First Nations in Alberta. Her father was in the army so she was moved around a lot and grew up in Whitehorse, Victoria and in Vancouver. When she was in Grade Five she was separated from her family and became a child in care.

It wasn't until she was older, inspired by watching an Indigenous dance troop called Traditional Mothers, that she became interested in Indigenous culture. Before joining the dance troop, a requirement was to take a traditional parenting course. "It opened up my life, there were teachings I didn't know about," says Victoria. From there she met an Indigenous Elder known as Holy Cow (Marie Fayant) who introduced her to Sundances in 1997. She says it changed her whole life and made her realize how important culture and family are.

Victoria married into the Leq'a:mel First Nation, and had five children of her own and is now a grandmother to 13 grandchildren. "Seeing your kids happy and healthy is one of the greatest things." She became familiar with Xyólheméylh through her involvement with the community care committees.

"I love being an Elder with Xyólheméylh," says Victoria. "They treat us so well, they are very thoughtful and kind and I feel respected."

Victoria recommends that social workers put themselves in the client's shoes. She acknowledges this may be harder for some of the younger social workers who have not had children of their own. "It's about taking the time to listen to the young ones and hear what they have to say. It's so important to realize how our words and actions make such a difference to kids in care."

## Visions and Voices

The Visions and Voices Youth Mentorship Program is now 10 years old. It was established for youth ages 13 and older who have been in care or previously in care with Xyólheméylh. The youth meet twice a month, share a meal and organize events. By doing so they connect to culture and build relationships with other youth in care in a safe space to be themselves. Our programs are a huge prevention piece and support our youth in self-identity, building self-confidence, learning life skills and building relationships.

The Annual Visions and Voices Annual Forum took place September 20 to 22 at Zajac Ranch in Mission. It was attended by 50 youth in care with activities including a petting zoo, making tie dye shirts, wall climbing, slahal, archery, karaoke, smore's, and stories around the campfire. Special guest was Madelaine McCallum, a young Indigenous dancer and motivational speaker who shared her own story of healing from a difficult childhood. The youth also met with a Jessy Neal from the Representative of Children and Youth's office.

The youth also attended the Gathering Our Voices conference on Vancouver Island and organized Lacrosse and Soccerpalooza events in the Summer of 2024. We would like to thank the New Relationship Trust for a grant that made some of these events possible. Here is a list of all the events the youth organized throughout the year:

- Soap Stone Carving
- Beading Nights
- Seven Sacred Teachings
- Life Skills Cooking
- First Aid Training
- Lacrosse
- Ribbon Skirt Making
- Bowling
- Learn to Fish
- Know Your Rights
- Soccerpalooza
- Canning Jam & Fish
- Powwow
- Fright Night
- Monster Mash

111

Number of Youth Events in 2024-25

478

Number of children ages 0-12, supported through events

28

Number of youth in the Visions and Voices Leadership Program

82

Number of separate visits by youth to our Youth Hub



# Meet a Visions & Voices Youth Leader: Hunter Holden



Hunter, who is White Bear Cree, was 9 years old when she went into care and was in and out of care until she had her son at 16 years old. She then entered into an independent living agreement. Hunter describes her time in care as “chaotic,” a series of group homes and long stays at youth shelters. She found herself on youth probation with the youth justice system and struggled with substance abuse before having her son.

“It was very hard not being connected culturally, I missed out on so much community and struggled with cultural identity. I didn’t know where I belonged,” says Hunter.

She started to reconnect with her culture at 19, and when she turned 22, she was connected to Visions and Voices, which gave her the opportunity to learn more about her culture and to help the younger kids. It was through visions and voices that she was hired by Xyólheméylh to become a Child and Youth Mentor on staff.

“I love it”, says Hunter. “It’s different being on the opposite side. I understand what it’s like to be a child in care. I’m not going to judge them, and I see a huge sense of relief when the youth I work with learn that about me.”

She is now 24 years old, in her third year of a Criminology major at university. Her goal is to continue working with kids, specifically Indigenous kids within the youth justice system and aims to keep youth connected to their culture.

She now has three kids of her own and has also become a caregiver for her nephew. This year she is celebrating five years with her partner, and 10 years sober. She is now very involved in learning and teaching her culture – dancing, drumming, sewing, learning the language and attending powwows. “It’s so fulfilling, I love it,” says Hunter.

# Meet a Visions & Voices Youth Leader: Steven Dykstra



Steven became involved with Visions and Voices when he was 17 and describes it as a second family. “We’re looking out for other kids in care,” says Steven. He also says Visions and Voices has helped him go deeper into his Indigenous culture which he missed out on as a child and youth in care.

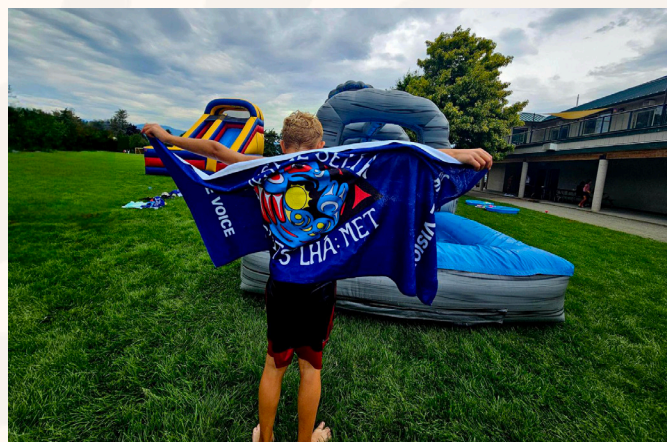
Steven is turning 21 years old this year. He has been in the foster system since he was two years old. He lived with his non-Indigenous family until he aged out, and while he hasn’t had contact with his bio parents, he is close with his grandfather and almost all his siblings.

When he was between 17 and 19 years old he got a new social worker and realized he had to advocate for himself. His advice for Indigenous youth is to get their application for status in earlier rather than later. “Push for status earlier, before you age out,” says Steven.

In his spare time, Steven likes to play Lego, computer games and take bike rides.

Raven Little, who is the Youth Program Coordinator for Visions and Voices says: “Steven has grown to become a strong male Indigenous leader in Visions and Voices and is a proud advocate for other youth in care. Steven channels his own experiences in care and actively advocates the need for children and youth to be connected with their family and culture. Not only does Steven sit on the Visions and Voices youth committee, he shares his voice at Xyólheméylh’s Cultural Committee, training initiatives and other community feedback forums. Steven is always the first to volunteer to support growth or positive changes at our agency or in the community and is always wanting to advocate for children and youth.”





Photos Opposite Page, Top to Bottom, Left to Right

Celebrating Youth Event, June 2024; Lacrosse, July, 2024; Learn to Fish, Summer 2024; Gathering Our Voices, Fall 2024; Visions and Voices Forum September 2024; Visions and Voices Forum September 2024; Soccerpalooza, July 2024; Powwow Fall 2024.

This page, left to right, top to bottom:

Bowling Tournament; Visions and Voices Annual Forum; Monter Mash; Soapstone Carving; Learning to Fish; Jam and Bannock Making.



# Our Programs

323

Number of Genograms created for children in care by Family Culture and Connections Team

Our programs fall into four main areas:

## The Stó:lō Basket

The Stó:lō Basket provides services to our member Stó:lō communities both on and off reserve. Child protection and family strengthening workers work alongside and collaboratively with band representatives and families. The focus is on a community-based, solution-focused approach that preserves family and culture.

## Family Strengthening

We work collaboratively with families and community partners to develop strategies so that children can remain safely with their families and to change the legacy of Indigenous children growing up in care, disconnected from family, culture and community. This means determining barriers to children remaining in homes and developing comprehensive and holistic plans to support children and families staying together.

## Child Protection

We provide immediate response and intervention to support “at risk” children and connect families to resources and supports. What makes us different is that we work for and with First Nations communities to focus on keeping families together when possible.

## Foster Care & Out of Care

When children cannot reside in their own homes, we make arrangements for out of care placement (with extended family) when possible, or foster care.

Here are some of the highlights in 2024-25:

## Screening:

In 2024-25 there was a temporary need to redistribute resources to ensure that Xyólheméylh could prioritize child safety and service delivery. As a short-term measure, Provincial Centralized Screening (PCS) provided support by accepting child protection reports. This support enabled the Xyólheméylh Screening & Service Request social workers to provide support in other areas of the organization, assisting teams to meet Xyólheméylh’s service delivery accountabilities.

## Collaborative Planning

In 2024-25 we created 318 collaborative plans with families to address child protection concerns and plan for children to be safely cared for in their families. As a result of the collaborative planning process:

- 220 Children did not enter care.
- 39 children left care and returned to family care
- 370 children were placed with family on temporary or permanent basis
- 348 children had new family visits and started to reconnect to their birth families
- 117 children attended cultural events, including travelling to their home communities.
- 45 Permanency Plans created for children in care.

## Regional Drop-In Events

The Stó:lō Basket organized 66 regional drop-in events in Stó:lō communities during 2024-25. The drop-ins were for families and youth and always involved sharing a meal and activities such as painting, movie nights, Slahal, crafts and more.

## Post Majority Team

We started a monthly/bi-monthly knowledge sharing circle with our young adults and Elders. During these circles, our Elders shared traditional knowledge and skills while supporting our young adults to connect with one another, as well as gain a stronger foundation and sense of belonging. We are currently supporting approximately 177 young adults.



66

Number of Family & Youth Drop-In Events in Sto:lo communities during 2024-25

177

Number of youth being supported by Post-Majority Team

L-R: Elder Greg Poitras, Lisa McCoy, Patrick Martin, Elder Desta Branham presented on the Men and Women’s Wellness Groups at the Our Children Our Way Conference



**Langley Child And Youth Advocacy Centre**

Xyólhemeylh’s Rhea Del Vecchio and Shawna Pearson were part of the committee that was led by Encompass Support Services Society and involved a number of other Langley based community partners that created the CYAC. Rhea and Shawna were blanketed for their work with the committee.

The CYAC is part of a network of centres in BC that are designed to provide a coordinated response to child abuse and crimes against children and youth. CYACs connect children, youth and their families to services designed to meet their unique needs, and assist them to navigate any system they may encounter such as medical, criminal justice, and child protection The CYAC is a coordinated, trauma informed, child and youth friendly, culturally safe, co-located program that will benefit many young victims in Langley.

**Smimeyath Ceremony**

On October 3, Xyólhemeylh held its first Smimeyath Ceremony in four years at the Sumas First Nation Longhouse. The ceremony is for youth who are “transitioning out of care.” It had been cancelled for several years because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Smimeyath is the Halq’emeylem word for butterfly and symbolizes the journey from youth into adulthood. The butterfly represents transformation, rebirth, movement through life as well as lightness of being. Twenty-eight youth attended the ceremony.



*Xyólhemeylh’s Rhea Del Vecchio and Shawna Pearson at the opening of the Langley Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC).*

**Men and Women’s Wellness Groups**

Xyólhemeylh staff and Elders collaborated with Elders to develop the Men’s and Women’s wellness groups in response to the impacts of domestic violence seen within the families and communities that we serve. This program is geared toward reducing occurrences of family violence by providing a safe space for reflecting on behaviors within relationships and an avenue for developing alternate strategies and skills around relationships, communication, and attachment.

This program is unique in that it amalgamates psycho-educational skill building and traditional ways of healing and resiliency. Through participation, families are introduced (or re-introduced) to traditional ways of healing and resiliency. They also build connections to local communities and cultural teachers, knowledge keepers, Elders, and leaders as well as create a community of support through peer relationships. In 2024-25 there were four groups, with a total of 34 graduating participants.

**Complaints Resolution Process**

In the course of working together, disagreements may arise between the clients we serve and our Xyólhemeylh staff members. Most concerns are addressed directly by staff without a formal complaint



34

Number of Participants in Men’s and Women’s Wellness Groups

*Youth entering the Smimeyath Ceremony at Sumas First Nation Longhouse.*



109

Number of Complaints received by Client Complaints Resolution Analyst

98%

Percentage of complaints resolved at local level of resolution

being made, however, when this is not possible, the Complaints Resolution Process provides a mechanism for our clients to express their concerns and for the concerns to be responded to in a respectful, empowering and fair manner. The Complaints Resolution Process is available to all program areas and is open to any individual who receives services or believes they should receive services from Xyólheméylh.

Clients who engage in the Complaints Resolution Process are supported by the Client Complaints Resolution Analyst throughout the process and are actively involved with Xyólheméylh staff to address their concerns in a solution focused process, which encourages problem solving and flexibility. A robust complaints process acknowledges our client’s strength of self-advocacy, encourages transparency, accountability and continuous quality improvement.

Our Client Complaint Resolution Analyst received 109 complaints in 2024-25, of which 75 per cent were eligible for the Complaints Resolution Process. Parents made up 50 per cent of complainants with grandparents and out-of-care caregivers making up an additional 20 per cent. Youth complainants made up eight per cent of complaints this year. Ninety eight per cent of complaints were addressed and resolved at the local level of resolution and two per cent of complainants requested an Administrative Review by the MCFD provincial review authority.



Wellness Group graduation ceremony  
- Elder Greg Poitras, Mickaella Laslo,  
Shawn Underhill, Shawn’s father,  
Elder Eddie Julian

# Our Caregivers

We raise our hands to all our wonderful caregivers and support parents! In June 2024 we held a Caregiver Fun Day at Ch’iyaqtel Sportsfield, with door prizes, a bbq, and games for the kids.

In October Xyólheméylh staff honoured our caregivers / support parents with an event at Shxwha:y Village Cultural Centre. The evening included a performance by the Dancers of Damelahamid from Gitxsan First Nation, a meal and gifts. As speaker, Matthew Schell said: “As Indigenous people we think of being a caregiver as a sacred role, so we honour you tonight.”

It is important for Xyólheméylh Caregivers to understand Indigenous culture so they can help the children and youth in their care stay connected to their culture. In addition to events throughout the year, Xyólheméylh offered virtual caregiver cultural teachings every two weeks on topics that ranged from traditional medicine to weaving cedar to Medicine Wheel teachings.

We continue to have partnership with Archway, to deliver training opportunities to our care providers, the following workshops have been offered for our caregivers:



355

Number of Caregiver Homes

20

Number of Caregiver Recruitment Information Sessions

Dancers of Damelahamid from Gitxsan First Nation at Caregiver Appreciation event.

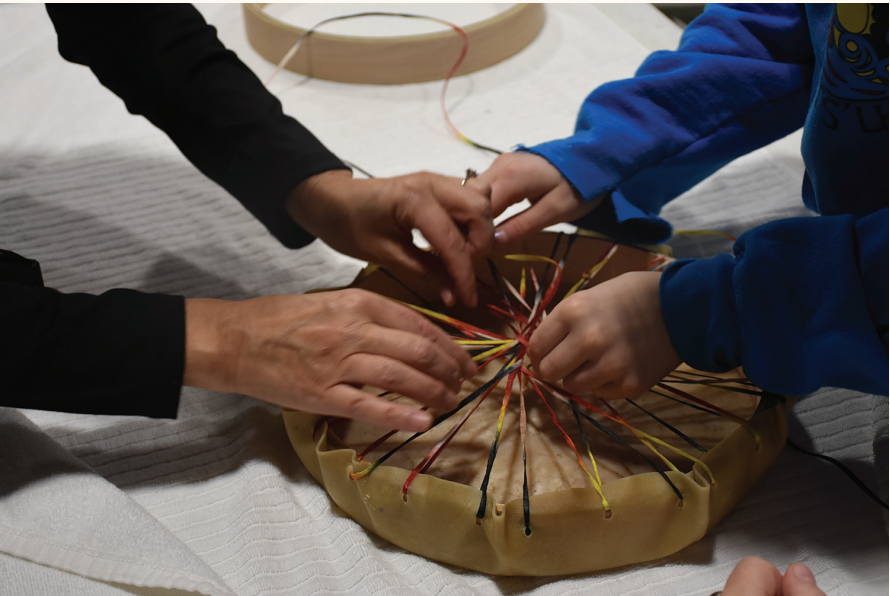


“ Nothing I have done has given me this much satisfaction. ”

- Xyólheméylh Caregiver  
Clover Bailey

- May workshops on “Understanding ADHD and How It Can Be A Superpower.”
- June -“Talking About Separation, Grief & Loss; Building Comfortability and Healing”
- Safe Babies Course (previously named Fostering Infant Care & Safety) September
- “A Circle-of Courage Perspective on Youth At-Risk.”
- Giving & Receiving Healing course starting November 2024
- “Navigating & Healing Trauma Related Behaviours.”
- “Parenting A Child With A History of Sexual Trauma.”
- “Navigating Social Media.”
- “Navigating Agency Protocols.”
- “Family Dynamics in Fostering.”
- “Preparing Youth for Adulthood.”

The Resources and Family Support Team has a Permanency Team that employs Family Cultural Connections Workers whose work is grounded in respect, truth, and connection. They work to ensure that every child knows who they are, where they come from, and what they belong to. They regularly share community events with caregivers, helping create opportunities for children to connect with their First Nations, Inuit, or Metis communities and territories. They help to find family so that children in care have connections to grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and siblings. They also liaise with Indigenous communities to ensure that children and youth in care can visit and be welcomed by their community.



Annual Christmas Party for children and youth in care and their caregivers/ support parents.

## Caseloads

### Stó:lō Communities

Community	CS - In Care	CS - Extended Family Program	CS - Interim/ Temporary Out of Care	CS Youth	Incident FDR/INV	SR - Request for Family Support	FS (Voluntary) Family Services	PMA Case Only	PMA with ICM Benefit Plans
Sxwoyeha:la	2	0	0	1	12	2	4	2	0
Shxwha:y Village	3	1	2	2	22	10	2	4	0
Chowethel	10	4	0	0	41	24	6	2	2
Sqwa	15	2	3	4	39	19	4	9	3
Xwchiyo:m	14	2	0	2	30	13	7	2	1
Sema:th	4	2	1	1	15	8	3	1	1
Sq'ewqeyl	4	1	7	0	33	5	4	1	3
Ch'iyagtél	4	0	0	0	24	10	3	1	0
Th'ewa:li	1	6	2	4	14	8	2	4	0
Athelets	3	2	0	0	4	0	0	1	0
Mathexwi	4	2	0	0	30	5	4	1	1
Shxw' owhamel	6	2	0	0	10	9	3	1	0
Popkw'em	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leq'a:mel	2	3	0	0	41	18	7	0	0
Yeqwyeqwi:ws	1	2	0	0	4	3	1	0	0
Sq'ewa:lxw	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Xwoxwela:lhþ	0	0	1	0	10	5	4	0	0
Total Cases	63	28	13	12	268	114	45	22	8

### Off Reserve Files

Year	FS	FDR	SR	In Care	OOC-CS	YAG	EFP	YSR	PMA	Total
2024-25	446	1404	589	330	91	44	80	54	154	3192

ICM Government Computer System for tracking client service  
FS Family Services (Voluntary)  
FDR Family Development Response / Incident  
SR Voluntary Service Request  
OOC-CS Out of Care Child Services  
YAG Youth Agreements

EFP Extended Family Plan  
YSR Youth Service Requests  
PMA Post Majority Agreements





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