

2025-2026 Xyólheméylh Annual Report



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Board of Directors President

In 2025–26, we welcomed two new members to the Xyólheméylh Board of Directors, Joanne Hugh and Melody Andrews. We also said goodbye to Josh Bailey and Glenda Campbell as they completed their terms and chose not to seek re-election. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank Josh and Glenda for the time, knowledge, and care they brought to their roles.

This has been a busy and important year for our Board and for Xyólheméylh as a whole. Much of our work has focused on strategic planning and taking an honest look at where we are as an organization — our strengths, the areas where we need to grow, the challenges in front of us, and the opportunities we have to build something stronger.

The Board is currently working with a consulting firm on a current-state analysis. This work will help guide priorities such as strengthening governance and leadership, supporting staff recruitment and retention, embedding culture throughout the organization, improving accountability and performance reporting, and ensuring that Xyólheméylh’s identity reflects who we are and the communities we serve.

Xyólheméylh carries an important history. The Society was created because Stó:lō communities wanted greater responsibility and a stronger voice in the care of their own children and families. That history continues to remind us why this work matters and why our path forward must remain grounded in culture, community, and the wellbeing of children and families.

There has been an incredible amount of work done throughout Xyólheméylh this past year. As a Board, we recognize the leadership and commitment of our Executive Leadership Team and the dedication of staff across the organization. Many carry demanding responsibilities every day, often while supporting children, youth, and families through some of the most difficult moments in their lives.

We also want to recognize our caregivers. The care you provide reaches far beyond your homes. You offer stability, safety, connection, patience, and belonging. Your contribution to the lives of children and youth—and to the work of Xyólheméylh—cannot be overstated.

To our Elders, thank you for continuing to share your knowledge, guidance, and truth with us. To the Stó:lō communities, leadership, families, caregivers, staff, and everyone who continues to walk alongside Xyólheméylh, thank you for holding us accountable and for helping us move forward.

There is still much work ahead of us. We will not always agree on every step or every decision, but I believe we share the same purpose: to build an organization that our children, families, and communities can trust and be proud of. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you to everyone who contributed to the work of Xyólheméylh over this past year.



Wásems 'iksduqwia - Angelina Bowen, President, XyólheméylhBoard of Directors

The Board of Directors - left to right, top to bottom: President: Wásems 'iksduqwia – Angelina Bowen; Vice-President: Wab'shkaan E'quet E'kway - Kelowa Edel; Treasurer: Brooke Metchewais; Secretary: Xwiyalemot - Joanne Hugh; Marion Mussell; Marcella Sunshine; XaXa Moqw – Peter John; Salacy-a-til – Phil Hall; Eyém Shxweli Shhá:li tel skwix - Melody Andrews



Executive Director of Programs



As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the hard work of our staff who are dedicated to serving the wonderful children and families we walk with. I am indebted to the Elders for their wisdom and guidance, and grateful to communities for supporting us. It has also been a privilege to collaborate with the Board and my colleagues on the Executive Leadership Team this year.

We acknowledge the past harms surrounding child safety work that have been perpetrated against the families and communities we serve. We are always working towards centering culture, while respecting community voice and adhering to the federal and provincial legislation we are held accountable to. Here at Xyólheméylh, wrapping around children and families and working towards children and family well-being is of the utmost importance.

We recognize that our organization has been facing some significant challenges over the past year that have shifted the way we have been able to work and provide care. To address these challenges some of our area of focus this year have included stabilizing our workforce, breaking down silos, strengthening our leadership and training new staff. Our workload stabilization plan has allowed us to:

- Recruit and hire fully delegated casual social workers to complete child safety work during evenings and weekends;
- Review work within each basket to identify and prioritize the areas of highest need;
- Recruit and hire new social workers into previously unfilled positions and prioritize the areas of highest need;
- Develop a new support team for out-of-care families caring for extended family, relieving the pressure from our resource teams, with the goal of increasing our support for our foster caregivers as well.

We have invested in our leadership and been more intentional in the way leaders interact, the way they are trained, and the success of supervisory relationships.

In this past year our efforts to decolonize group work for men and women experiencing domestic violence has continued, reaching over 200 people served. This low barrier programming is Elder led and culturally grounded. One of the participants shared their appreciation that the program was “fitting the content to the group, not the group into the content.” This program has significantly high retention rates (currently averaging 80 per cent with men and 85 per cent with women). Participants consistently report wishing the groups could continue with one stating “I will miss Elders Cheryl and Darlene’s teachings, especially the teaching about our ancestors.” Overall, there has been a significant impact on increasing access and

reunification for children in care and preventing children from coming into care. I am excited to share that our leadership also took on some passion projects this year to establish some Xyólheméylh-specific practice resources that are grounded in culture and replace the previous requirements from MCFD. A new resource named by Elder Amy Victor, “I AM _____” is currently being rolled out to support youth to know and own their own story about life’s key moments and transitions.

In this coming year, the team is eager to work closely with Stó:lō designated representatives and communities to develop a Stó:lō specific care plan and ensure that our work is grounded in S’ólh Téméxw.

Xyólheméylh Leadership understands that we have a heavy responsibility to show up for the most vulnerable people we work with. Over 100 programs and events have been offered to provide cultural, social and life skills support to our youth in care through our active Visions and Voices Advisory Council. We also took steps to grow cultural connections within our post majority work. This is still a developing area of work for Xyólheméylh and we continue to support 285 young adults between the ages of 17-27 on post majority agreements. Young adults have access to financial and educational support similar to other post majority programs, but what is unique here is a focus on relationship. The post majority workers are supporting healing, cultural connections and ensuring young adults still find their circle and develop a sense of belonging.

None of this work could happen without our very dear Elders’ guidance. My hands go up to them for their support this year. I am excited to share that the vision for the future is shifting our focus from protection to prevention, supporting family ties and relationships, reducing the number of children in care, and revitalizing Indigenous ways of knowing within the work. Additionally, one of the most significant goals is to build meaningful partnerships, recognizing that strong relationships and collaboration is an essential part of the work we do to take strides towards this vision.

I am thrilled to see where this vision takes us. We aim for strong service delivery that allows us to wrap around our children and families together. We honour and respect the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples and hope to deepen relationships with communities through collaboration and connection with a focus on revitalizing the meaning of doing work in a good way.

Laura-Dawn Wilkin, Executive Director of Programs

Executive Director of Administrative Services



I raise my hands to all of our committed staff who continue day in, and day out show up and support the children, youth and families we work alongside in many different roles. My hands go up to our Elders who demonstrate what it means to work in a good way and uphold our core H.E.A.R.T. values in the way they guide our children, youth, families and our staff. Thank you to both the Board of Directors and my fellow ELT members for their continued support and leadership as we work together in making changes to improve the services and support to all those we serve.

I have the privilege in leading the Administrative, Finance, Facilities, Human Resources, Training and Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) staff. These hard-working staff provide administrative, clerical, labor relations, training, IT, and financial support to over 320 staff members. They look after all our vehicles, buildings and other assets to ensure we continue to operate. They support payments to children, youth, families, vendors, and staff in excess of 3,800 transactions per month.

Highlights of the year included:

- Employee Wellness Program for staff and Elders
- Review of OHS, Finance and HR Policies
- New offices opened in Chilliwack (Luckakuck) & Langley (Logan Ave)
- New in-house Cultural Safety Training developed

Priorities for the coming year include:

- Continued focus on employee wellness
- Review of process to reduce potential barriers
- Continue Indigenizing our recruitment process
- Continued enhancement of our office spaces to be welcoming

I am very honoured to be able to live, play and work within the xáxá témexw te Stó:lō and to be a part of the Xyólheméylh family.

Kw'as ho:y
Rod Spitzig
Executive Director of Administrative Services

Executive Director of Staff & Community Relations

It is my honour to report on the highlights in 2025-26 as the Interim Executive Director, Staff and Community Relations.

As an Indigenous organization, we are deeply committed to living Stó:lō teachings in our daily work and in the ways that we care for one another as a family. This past fall we began the process of cleansing our offices, starting in Chilliwack. This is in recognition of the fact that our work can sometimes be very heavy and that we are committed to the holistic wellbeing of our staff. Caring for spirit continued in February with the Xyólheméylh burning held at St. Mary's in Mission. We plan on carrying out the cleansing to our other office locations throughout the Stó:lō Territory. This sacred work was led by Joanne Jefferson – Siqwamiya - and Saylesh Wesley - Poleqtanot, who guided and held the burning in a good way. They called forward the presence of our ancestors and carried this important responsibility with due care and respect.

The Urban Community Relations Team made significant progress in strengthening organizational capacity, cultural resources, and community connections. They established the Cultural Library, creating a valuable resource that is now available for staff lending and for sharing culturally relevant books, workbooks, and learning materials with children and youth. This initiative supports cultural learning, identity development, and ongoing staff education. They also completed Away From Home Profiles for more than 200 Indigenous communities, providing accessible information to support culturally informed practice and stronger connections between children, youth, families, and their home communities.

This team has gathered information on community tables, committees, and collaborative forums where Xyólheméylh's participation is most needed, helping to strengthen community engagement and strategic representation. We also continued our work on developing community protocols with member First Nations. Another area of responsibility for me is our Xyólheméylh Elders program which you can read about in this Annual Report. Elders are embedded in everything we do and we are so grateful to them for their wisdom and guidance.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their support and our wonderful staff for their immense contributions. I would also like to raise my hands to all the Stó:lō communities for walking alongside us in a spirit of support and collaboration.

Teresa Galis - Shoy:etelwet, Memia:a, Qwa kwiah maat, Tłalilila'yugwa
Interim Executive Director of Staff and Community Relations



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

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

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

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

Respect - *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.

Trust - *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.

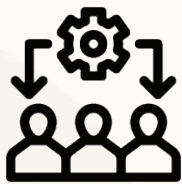
2

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 Commu-
nities we serve

85%

Percentage of Lats'u:mexw (away from
home) families we work with

33%

Percentage of children, youth and
families we serve who are Métis

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 (Yakweakwioose); and
- Xwoxwelá:lh (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 (head office), Mission,

Abbotsford and Langley .Currently we have offices in the following Stó:lō Commu-
nities: 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.

Fiscal year 2025-26 saw continued growth of our work force with 354 dedicated
employees, an increase of 9.5 per cent. This was the result of strong recruitment
with 47 new hires (compared to 40 previous year), and industry-leading retention
at 89.8 per cent (compared to 86 per cent the previous year). Leadership from all
levels of the organization have made Xyólheméylh an employer of choice through
out the Valley, and we are excited to welcome so many new team members and
support and celebrate our employees who have been with us through the years.

At this years Staff Appreciation event we were able to honour several employees
who crossed significant milestones with us in the fiscal year including:

- 14 people at 5 years
- 6 people at 10 years
- 3 people at 15 years
- 2 people at 20 Years
- 2 people at 25 years

In addition to growing and celebrating our employee base, our employees contin-
ued to be supported by strong training and development. Our employees were pro-
vided with 85 unique training courses, totaling more than 7,500 hours of training.
Most impactful of these trainings was the Mental Health First Aid – First Nations
Focus. We had the opportunity to develop four in-house trainers and as a result
can now train all of our staff to have these important tools and skills.

We have continued to focus on workplace safety for all of our employees and have
seen the number of workplace injuries/illness claims decrease from 30 to 25 as
a result of strong work from our Health and Safety Team. More work needs to be
done, but we are encouraged by significant progress in this area. We continue to
invest in employee wellness and the causes of injury/illness in a proactive manner
to prevent incidences and the long term impacts of our work from effecting our
employees.

354

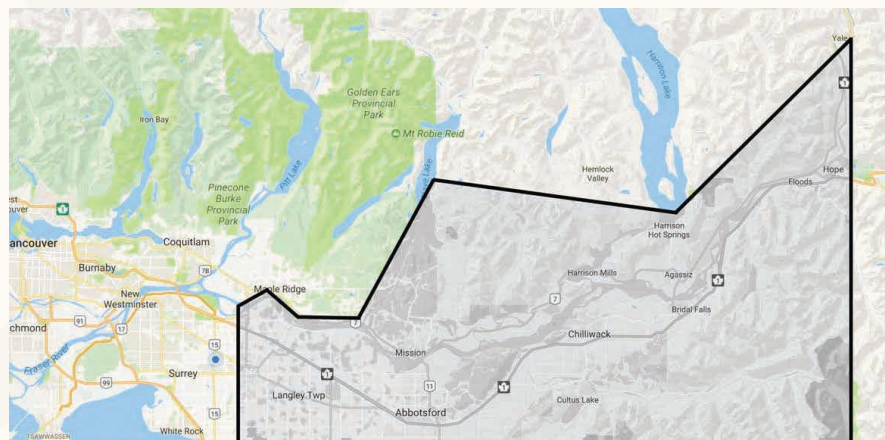
Number of Staff

7500

Hours of Staff Training

89.8%

Percentage of Staff Retention



Our Geographic Service Area (GSA) covers Yale to the East, Langley/Surrey Fraser Region boundary on the West (196th Street), Maple Ridge/Mission 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 communities of non-Member First Nations, as set out in the map.

Our Elders Coordinators Team, Tanya James, Colleen Hourigan and Sasha Ratsoy; Our Lacrosse Coaching Team.

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 offer 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 18 Elders on our Elders Advisory Council and nine Auxilliary 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 2025-26:

- Xyólheméylh holds a Memorandum of Understanding with Archway Community Services to provide culturally sensitive services to Indigenous clients. This includes consulting with Elders. In 2025-26, Elders attended Archway and the Foundry, on 73 occasions.
- Elders attended 267 Family Conference Planning Circles;
- Elders attended 74 Family Group Circles;
- Elders attended 108 one on one staff support meetings;
- Elders attended 340 staff meetings;
- Elders attended 148 training sessions;
- Elders attended 56 Connection Circles;

27

Number of Elders on Elders Advisory Committee and Auxillary Elders

652

Number of Elder in the Office Appointments

246

Number of One on One Client Support Meetings

47

Number of Healing Circles Facilitated by Elders



Opposite Page

Top row, left to right: Amy Victor (St'enh:ot); Rosemary Trehearne (Tha tisia); Sherry Epp; Elaine Malloway;
 2nd row, left to right: Louise Silver Kaarsmaker (Masquaelta); Sid Douglas; Darlene Tommy; Lolly Andrew.
 3rd row, left to right: ; Victoria L'Hirondelle; Jade Diablo; Leo Nolin; Leona Pennier-Hall;
 4th row, left to right: Desta Branham; Cynthia Myran- Myerion; Dawn Johnson; Greg Poitras;
 5th row, left to right: Rikki Kooy; Debra Merrier (Auxiliary Elder); Allan Mason (Auxiliary Elder); Julie George (Lexlexwenel);

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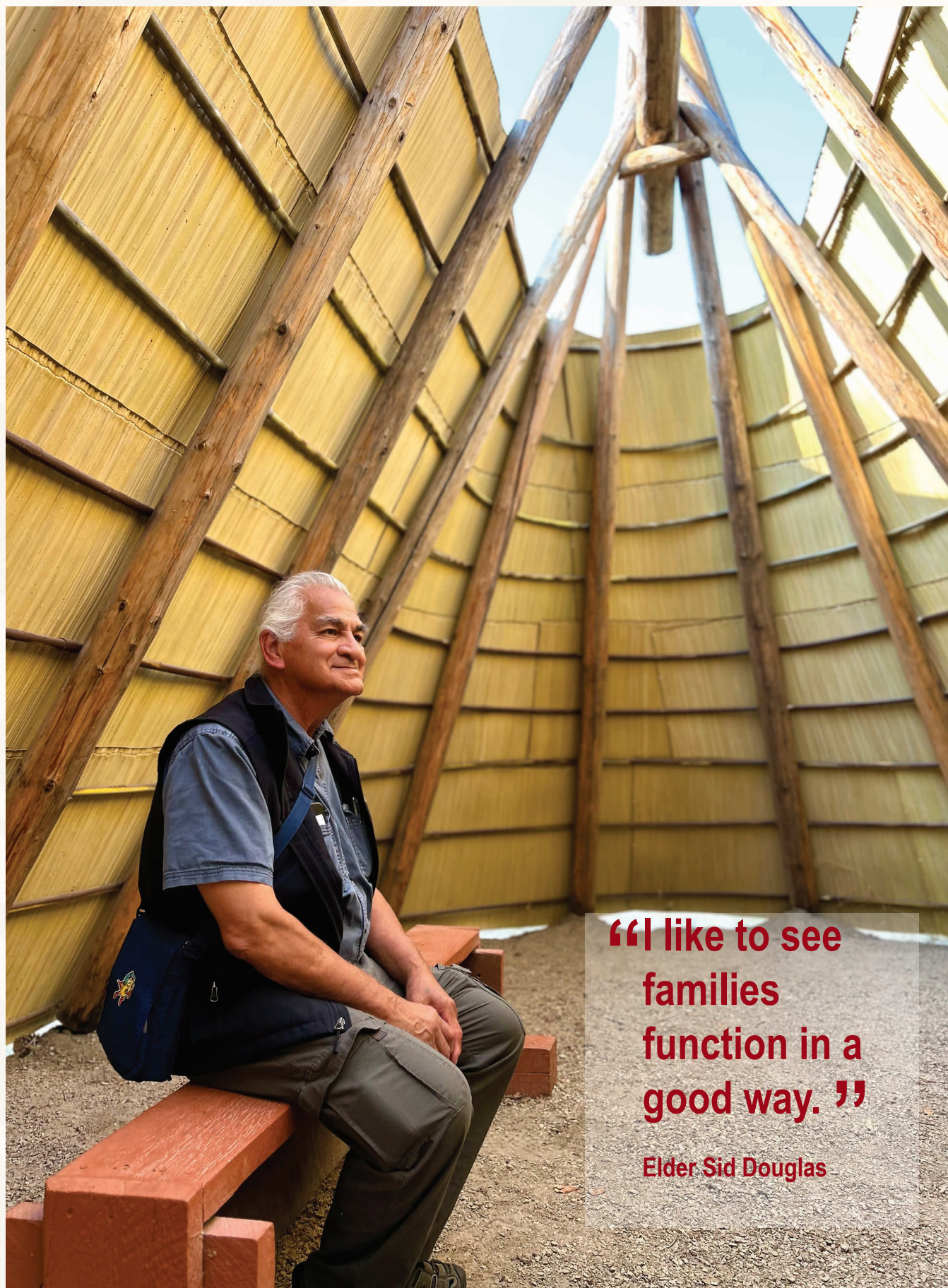
Top row, left to right: Brenda Isaac; Linda Jollymore; Jean Brassard; Wichem (Ron) Williams;
 2nd row, left to right: Roberta Friesen, Randy Sam, Lynne Barisoff.



Elder Violet George in Loving Memory

In September of 2026, Elder Violet George passed away. Violet was from the Ch'iyáqtel First Nation and lived at Skwah First Nation since 1972. Violet had been with Xyólhemeylh since the beginning, first as a Board member and then as an Elder for the last 20 years.

We will remember Violet for her years of service to Xyólhemeylh and for her wisdom, kindness and gentle nature. We were fortunate to know her and will miss her very much. We send our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends and communities.



“I like to see families function in a good way.”

Elder Sid Douglas

Meet an Elder: Greg Poitras

Greg Poitras is passionate about helping people get their feet on the ground and to be proud of themselves. “We have to love ourselves first, the heart must be open to you as a person so it can open itself up to others,” says Greg.

Greg was one of the Elders for the Xyólheméylh Men’s Wellness Group and he talks about one man that he helped through mentoring. When Greg met him the man was struggling, he was separated from his family with only short visiting privileges to his children. He’s now back with his wife and children. “That is my purpose, to bring people along, to sit with them, hug them and make them look in the mirror every morning and say ‘I love you.’ We have a bond that will be around for a long time,” says Greg

Greg’s father was Métis from Lebret, Saskatchewan and his mother was Norwegian. He was actually born in an Indian residential school with nuns delivering him because there was a snowstorm, and they couldn’t make it to the hospital in Regina. Greg grew up in a family of four kids, with strong values, respect for Elders and a strong sense of community. He had many aunts, uncles and cousins, one of whom was the late Gil Poitras who was a beloved Elder with Xyólheméylh. Unlike Gil, he didn’t grow up learning to smudge, but he grew up jigging.

“When I was young, I never walked anywhere, I jigged,” says Greg. “I was always around music. My father could speak English, French, Cree and Mitchif, but he never taught me those languages because back in those days, we were the dirt under people’s shoes,” says Greg. The family eventually moved to BC in 1955 which is where Greg grew up. He says there was less discrimination in BC. “The racism didn’t go away, but it wasn’t in your face all day, every day.”

Greg loves to laugh and sees humour as the best medicine. “I like to be transparent, I like to believe I’m a better healer than I am a hurter,” says Greg. He also sees himself as a problem solver, which is reflected in how he spent his working life. He was a sheet metal worker by trade until he had an accident, falling 32 feet. He retrained as a safety and security officer and worked with the federal government on the Canadian coast guard, western region.

Greg has been married to Barb for 53 years, with one son and three daughters, eight grandkids and one great grand kid. “We are very blessed. They all live locally. I’m very fortunate. My strongest values that were instilled in me that I’ve instilled in my kids is that it’s about family, respect for Elders, and to be polite. I have strong sense of community,” says Greg.



“ My strongest values that were instilled in me that I’ve instilled in my kids is that it’s about family, respect for Elders, and to be polite. I have strong sense of community. ”

Visions and Voices

137

Number of Youth Events in 2025-26

571

Number of children ages 0-12, supported through events

1152

Number of youth supported through events

1231

Number of young adults and adults that attended events

21

Number of youth in the Visions and Voices Leadership Program

The Visions and Voices Youth Mentorship Program was created 11 years ago. 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. Participating in the program connects the youth to culture and supports building relationships with other youth in care in a safe space. We are also pleased to announce the development of a new website for Indigenous youth in care. The Visions and Voices Youth Portal features resources for youth, events, resources for post-majority youth and cultural teachings. The url is: <https://youth.fvacfss.ca>.

One of the highlights every year is the Annual Visions and Voices Annual Forum which took place September 18 to 20 at Zajac Ranch in Mission. It was attended by 50 youth in care with activities including wall climbing, drumming, archery, a talent show and stories around the campfire. Special guests included Indigenous rap artist Boslen, Hip Hop artist and speaker Bryant Doradea with Higher Knowledge Music. The youth were also encouraged to make positive change by sharing their voice in youth feedback workshops.

The youth also attended the Gathering Our Voices Conference on Vancouver Island and organized Lacrosse and Soccerpalooza events in the Summer of 2025. 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
- Coast Salish Art

Meet a Visions and Voices Youth: Anastasia Sedore

Anastasia Sedore, who is Ojibwe, entered foster care when she was just three years old. She describes her experience in care as “turbulent,” spending time in more foster homes and group homes than she can count. At 12 years old, she was separated from her younger brother when their foster parent chose to keep him but not her. “I spent a lot of my childhood feeling confused, lonely, and wondering why I wasn’t enough to be loved,” says Anastasia.



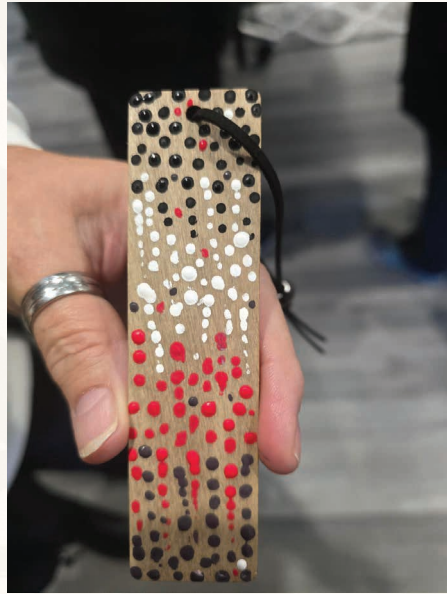
Growing up, Anastasia wasn’t as connected to her culture as she would have liked and only began reconnecting with it in her later teen years. After experiencing abuse in a foster home, she entered into an Independent Living Agreement at 16. Around that time, her best friend’s family welcomed her into their home and showed her the unconditional love and stability she had longed for. “They gave me the kind of family I always dreamed of having. They helped me believe that my past didn’t have to define my future.”

Determined to break the cycle, Anastasia committed herself to healing through therapy and became sober while rediscovering her identity through both her faith and her culture. Although her father passed away when she was 13, taking much of her family history with him, she has recently reconnected with their relatives and is continuing to learn more about her Ojibwe roots.

Anastasia became involved with Visions and Voices in the spring of 2025 and continues to be an active member today. She says the program has given her the opportunity to advocate for youth currently in care and be the supportive adult she always needed growing up. “Having my voice heard heals my inner child. I get to look out for youth the way I always wished someone had looked out for me.”

Today, Anastasia lives independently and works two jobs, including planning and coordinating events. Inspired by mentors she has met through Visions and Voices, she plans to attend university to pursue event coordination as a career. She hopes to continue growing in her faith, deepen her connection to her culture, advocate for youth in care, and build a peaceful, stable future for herself and her future family. In her spare time, Anastasia enjoys beading, hiking, attending cultural events through Xyólheméylh, camping, swimming, and spending time in community.

Her advice for youth in care is simple: “Don’t let anyone silence you. Take up space. Be brave and advocate for yourself. Ask for help when you need it — you never know what opportunities or support are available unless you ask. If you feel like your voice isn’t being heard, remember that you can contact the Representative for Children and Youth (RCYBC). There are people who will listen.”



Photos Opposite Page, Top to Bottom, left to right

Celebrating Youth Event, June 2025;
 Coast Salish Art Workshop March 2025; Lacrosse, July, 2025; Soapstone Carving; Learn to Fish, Summer 2025; Visions and Voices Forum September 2025; Christmas Party 2025; Vyper Pow Wow.

This page, left to right, top to bottom:
 Coast Salish Art Workshop March 2025; Beading Workshop November 2025; Visions and Voices Annual Forum September 2025; Wood burning workshop; Kitchen Skills March 2026.

Our Programs

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 Safety

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.

Guardianship & 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 2025-26:

Screening:

In 2025-26 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. Our screening team will resume operation on October 26.

Child Safety and Permanence

The Collaborative Practice Team in the Family Development Response basket

- Works with Social Workers to promote permanency;
- Ensures cultural plans are developed for Children in Care
- Develop Genograms and assist in connecting children to family and community;
- Identifies and supports Out of Care or other permanency options;
- Supports family in their process to be approved as permanent placements;
- Acts as a liaison between the social workers and communities.

The Collaborative Practice Facilitators:

- Facilitate traditional family planning meetings and youth transition conferences;
- Guide the planning meetings and ensures that all voices at the table are heard;
- Facilitate the development of plans that ensure safety and wellbeing of children/youth and support families to keep their children with family and in the community;
- Facilitate meetings that work to ensure youth are appropriately transitioned from care to permanence/independence.

In 2025-26 highlights include: (does not include the FCCW work done in Resources):

- 109 children did not enter care as a result of intervention
- 24 children were returned to care of family
- 146 out of care placements were secured
- 146 collaborative planning meetings were held
- 151 care plans, youth agreements and genealogies were completed



Laura-Dawn Wilkin, Elder Sheree Epp and Rod Spitzig.

285

Number of young adults supported by our Post Majority team.

Regional Drop-In Events

The Stó:lō Basket organized 47 regional drop-in events in Stó:lō communities during 2025-26. 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

The Post Majority team continued monthly cultural gatherings for the young adults they support across the Fraser Valley. What began as an opportunity to create meaningful cultural connections has gained wonderful momentum and has become something our young adults genuinely look forward to each month.

These gatherings are creating space for young adults to build friendships, strengthen relationships, connect with culture, and develop a greater sense of belonging. We are seeing meaningful connections and relationships grow, while also witnessing many of our young adults gain greater independence, confidence, and opportunities to strengthen their cultural connections.

As our Post Majority team continues to grow, they are now supporting approximately 285 young adults across the Fraser Valley. These monthly gatherings are an important part of that support, providing opportunities to come together, celebrate culture, build community, and create lasting connections.

Smímeyáth Ceremony

In September 2025, Xyólheméylh held its annual Smímeyáth Ceremony at the Sumas First Nation Longhouse. The ceremony is for youth who are transitioning out of care. Smímeyath 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. One hundred and eighty-seven people attended the ceremony.

Men's and Women's Wellness Groups

Xyólheméylh 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.

Complaints Resolution Process

In the course of working together, disagreements may arise between the clients we serve and our Xyólheméylh staff members. Most concerns are addressed directly by staff without a formal complaint 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 family's strength of self-advocacy, encourages transparency, accountability and continuous quality improvement.

Our Client Complaint Resolution Analyst received 123 complaints in 2025-26, of which 82 per cent were eligible for the Complaints Resolution Process. Ninety-seven per cent of complaints were addressed at the agency level with the complainants and involved staff, and three per cent of complainants requested Administrative Reviews from MCFD. Complainants were made up of the following populations last year:

- 61 per cent were parents;
- 20 per cent were caregivers - both for in care, children and youth and children and youth in out of care options;
- 17 per cent were concerned relations (grandparents, aunts etc.);
- Two per cent were youth.

Cedar is Life

One of our highlights during 2025-2026 was the creation of Cedar is Life, a resource to support children and youth in care to collect and own their information on their journey to health and wellness care. For many years we have been using

123

Number of complaints received through the Client Complaint Resolution process.

97%

Percentage of complaints that were resolved at the agency level.



MCFD's Health Passport which tracks the child or youth and their health history over the years, but we have found it needed a more Indigenous focus. So, we made our own and have begun using them with the families we serve. It includes a more holistic focus on the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual health of a child or youth, and contributions to wellness that are provided by the communities.



Women's Wellness Ceremony, May, 2026

Our Caregivers

Family Strengthening Team

The Resources and Family Support Team that supports guardianship 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 Métis 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. During 2025-26 this guardianship focused family strengthening team provided services to approximately 100 children and youth. Throughout the year, two children successfully returned to the care of their families and two out-of-care placements were secured.

The Family Cultural Connections Workers facilitated 102 family visits and completed 83 Collaborative Planning Meetings, including Connection Circles, Cultural Safety Agreement Circles and Family Group Circles. FCCWs also distributed, attended or facilitated 477 cultural ceremonies, gatherings, activities and resource opportunities.

430

Number of Resource Homes

20

Number of Caregiver Recruitment Information Sessions

Caregivers at our Caregiver Appreciation event.



83

Number of Collaborative Planning Meetings, including Connection Circles, Cultural Safety Agreement Circles and Family Group Circles

477

Number of cultural ceremonies, gatherings, activities and resource opportunities attended by FCCWs in the Resources Basket.



Training for Caregivers

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

- Raising Resilient Kids After Parental Substance Misuse
- Complex Behaviours Workshop
- Caregiving Through Change
- Identity, Belonging and Cultural Humility
- Caregiver Burnout
- Giving and Receiving Healing
- Boundaries with Clarity and Confidence
- Self-harm and Suicidality

Highlights

We raise our hands to all our wonderful caregivers and support parents. In July we hosted our annual Caregiver Fun Day where we enjoyed a BBQ and had activities and crafting tables for caregivers at Ch'iyagtel Sports field. In October, we held our annual Caregiver Appreciation event, hosted at the The'l:tseliya SAY Building in Chilliwack.

We established a new Out of Care Team in January 2026.

On of our goals this year is to focus on recruitment of care homes on reserve. We are attending events in the community and developed a recruitment video.

Thank you to our caregivers!

Photo above: Caregivers honoured at our Caregiver Appreciation event in October.

2025-26 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	Saje Case Only	Saje with ICM Benefit Plans
Athelets	4	2	0	0	5	0	0	1	1
Ch'iyagtel	4	0	0	2	33	10	3	1	2
Chowethel	8	9	2	1	43	17	7	2	4
Mathexwi	4	5	0	0	27	1	4	0	3
Popkw'em	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sema:th	5	2	0	0	22	3	2	0	2
Shxw'owhamel	5	2	0	0	14	9	3	0	1
Shxwha:y Village	5	2	5	2	23	12	2	0	8
Sq'ewa:lxw	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Sq'ewqeyl	4	2	5	0	40	12	3	0	8
Sqwa	16	0	4	1	46	10	6	2	13
Sxwoyeha:la	2	0	0	1	11	2	4	0	2
Th'ewa:li	1	2	2	4	19	6	4	0	4
Xwchiyo:m	21	1	0	5	46	10	8	0	7
Xwoxwela:lhp	2	2	0	0	12	3	4	0	0
Yeqwyeqwi:ws	1	4	0	0	2	4	1	0	0
Leq'a:mel	6	3	0	0	39	18	5	0	0
Total Cases	76	36	16	15	307	96	45	4	43

Part of the focus this year has been for the numbers and caseloads to be accurate and current. These numbers are a reflection of the workforce challenges which impacted workers ability to close their work with families in a timely manner. In this past year 110 incidents alone have been closed by the team.

Moving forward all open work will be reviewed with individual communities on a regular basis and during tracking (quality assurance meetings).

Láts'ú:mexw (Away from Home) Files

Year	FS	FDR	SR	In Care	OOC-CS	YAG	EFP	YSR	PMA	Total
2025-26	480	1521	549	392	71	36	62	53	271	3,435

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 (Interim and Temporary)
SAJE Strengthening Abilities and Journeys of Empowerment

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



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