



# Sasamans Society

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## *2015/16 AGM Report*

Pauline Janyst, Executive Director

**Our History**

Our name was derived from community engagement discussions in 2009/10 with leaders and frontline workers. The logo was created by Curtis Wilson. The services Sasamans provides came from our community engagement sessions along with the Voices of Our Elder I & II. These were facilitated over a period of two years.

**Vision**

Sasamans Society's *Vision* is “To strengthen our children and families in a community-driven and culturally appropriate manner.” In the Kwak'wala language, Sasamans means "our children"; the society's name reflects our intention to listen, acknowledge and honour the voices of the communities that we serve. Sasamans is supported and guided by the Board of Directors (BOD), comprised of community representatives from our partnering First Nation Bands and Aboriginal Urban agencies.

**Mission Statement**

For the well-being of our children & families, we are committed to providing support to work collectively based on a holistic model from a community-driven process.

**Beliefs and Values**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Every child needs someone to believe in them.</li> <li>▪ Children have to be safe.</li> <li>▪ Children are sacred.</li> <li>▪ Our children are our reason for living.</li> <li>▪ Children need a safe loving environment.</li> <li>▪ Respect for our children</li> <li>▪ We believe every child &amp; their families have gifts and strengths.</li> <li>▪ Every child deserves to be loved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children belong with their family.</li> <li>▪ Children and families have the right to be heard.</li> <li>▪ Parents must start taking responsibility.</li> <li>▪ Families must start taking responsibility.</li> <li>▪ All families do the best with what they have.</li> <li>▪ Children &amp; Families need someone to trust.</li> <li>▪ Children have the right to children.</li> <li>▪ We are here to hold a sacred space for our children &amp; families.</li> </ul>
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## **Message from Chair**

On behalf of our respective board members I would like to extend appreciation to our partnering organizations and surrounding communities for your continued support.

Throughout this year Sasamans Society has continued to look at ways to increase services and has been successful with our new Elders and Youth services. I commend our Executive Director for her hard work and dedication to make this happen.

We continue to work and dialogue with our communities, Elders, and youth. And we remain determined in our journey of keeping our children at the centre, as our focus. We continue to assure that the work we are doing is in the best interest and well-being for our communities.

I continue to applaud the work that is taking place with our Elders and how they will be integrated into not only our work at Sasamans but the community as a whole.

In closing, I would like to commend the hard work by all the staff at Sasamans, for without their professional expertise we would not exist. And to support the retirement of our Executive Director, we have appreciated all she has given to Sasamans over the past 6 ½ years. We wish her well as she moves back to Victoria.

Gilakas'la,  
'Walas'gwa yum gee  
Richard Dawson, Board Chair

## **Message from the Executive Director**

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to our AGM and to acknowledge the amazing traditional lands of the Laichwiltach people. It has been a privilege and an honour to be of service to the communities we served.

As you all know this is my final AGM with Sasamans. I want to thank each and every person and organization I worked with. The society created collaborative working relationships with many other organization such as John Howard Society, Laichwiltach Family Life, G&N Health Centre and some of the First Nations Bands.

I want to especially acknowledge the Elders who are involved in the healing and training sessions we have been offering for four (4) years. They are truly amazing women with strong voices, and they are an inspiration to me as I journey back to Victoria where my husband and I reside. I would also like to thank Kim Roberts and Lorraine Henderson for their warm welcome and support by providing the meeting space in-kind for the Elders.

I'd like to thank our amazing, knowledgeable compassionate staff, they make my job easy 😊 Along with the board of directors, their kind understanding and support when I needed it.

Gilakas'la  
Pauline Janyst

## **Aboriginal Outreach Family/Youth Navigators**

The purpose of the **Aboriginal Outreach Family/Youth Navigators** program is to enhance service provision, provide advocacy, decrease children in care, and improve accountability through a family-centered approach that focuses on meeting the need of both clients and families.

The Navigators provide support and guidance to Aboriginal families and youth who may be at risk of becoming involved with MCFD as well as providing assistance to families whose children or grandchildren are in the care of MCFD.

## **Cultural Connections Program**

The purpose of the **Cultural Connections** program is to create Cultural Plans for children in care and to assist the Ministry worker to develop and implement appropriate re-unification plans and identify children for whom a return to family or community may be appropriate. This position is based out of Campbell River and services our catchment area which includes Gold River/Tahsis, Sayward and Quadra/Cortez Island.

## **Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders**

The elders committee was established in 2013/14 to be a support and/or provide guidance to the Sasamans Society staff, other First Nations organizations, youth, families at risk, and other agencies including the Ministry of Children and Family Development. This support would include cultural appropriateness, protocols in the traditional territories, guidance and their wisdom.

The Elders have completed a variety of training and healing sessions with funds from New Horizons, First Nations Health Authority and New Relationship Trust. Some of the Elders are now ready to provide support and guidance in our communities.

## **Cultural Safety**

Sasamans is committed to providing culturally sensitive services to the Aboriginal clients in Campbell River, Port Hardy and Courtenay. We are aware that the urban communities are comprised of many different Nations; therefore we respect and value the traditional teachings of all Aboriginal people.

## **Funding**

Sasamans programs are primarily funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development through the Aboriginal Service Innovation stream. Sasamans currently receives funding from the Victoria Foundation, New Relationship Trust and First Nations Health Authority.

## **Services Catchment regions**

Sasamans services Courtenay, Port Hardy and Campbell River for both on and off reserve people.

- Courtenay acquired a Youth Navigator this past year and has an Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator that operates out of the Wachiay Friendship Center.

- Port Hardy has an Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator that operates out of the G&N Health Centre.
- Campbell River has an Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Youth Navigator, Cultural Connections worker that operates out of the head office.



## Society Staff

Jane Watts - Ellens, Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Port Hardy  
 Lori Bull – Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Campbell River  
 Aaron Thompson, Youth Navigator, Courtenay  
 Samantha Webster, Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Courtenay  
 Ashley Visser, Youth Navigator, Campbell River  
 Rachel Cain, Cultural Connections worker, Campbell River  
 Nicole Kitts, Aboriginal Elders Outreach Navigator  
 Crystal Assu, Bookkeeper  
 Erin Smith, Reception  
 Pauline Janyst, Executive Director

## Board of Directors

Richard Dawson, Chair  
 Nick Chowdhury, Vice Chair  
 Marian Atkinson, Treasurer  
 Vera Peacey, Secretary  
 Keith Wilson  
 Barb Mitchell  
 Pita Pimlott  
 Gloria Nicolson  
 Tamara Alfred  
 Hazel Ettagiak  
 Patrica Speck

## **What's NEW for 2016/17 & moving forward?**

### **Elders**

The Sasamans Society is pleased to announce that, through partnership with First Nations Health Authority, a NEW Aboriginal Outreach Elders Navigator will be joining our team.

The Elders training/healing sessions are the root of the creation of an "Aboriginal Outreach Elder Navigator" position. This person will work with the Elders and organizations wanting to utilize their services. The service commenced Oct 3rd, 2016 with Nicole Kitts as the new worker.

### **Youth**

Sasamans also acquired funds from Urban Partnership under BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centre. This program will enhance the Youth Navigator in Courtenay.

This project is aimed at assisting urban Aboriginal youth, aged 16-24, living in the Comox Valley away from their reserve land; they will be supported as they move into an urban setting. Some youth are involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), and/or are in government care. We will provide information, support, guidance and workshops to youth in a culturally appropriate manner.

Information provided will include; needs and rights for legal assistance, rights as a youth in care, child protection laws in BC, information about the court process, community resources and services available, employment opportunities, educational information and resources.

Support will include; cultural support, liaison between community, family and external professionals, support youth through transition planning, assist with youth agreements, assist with independent living agreements, assistance in achieving their educational and employment goals.

## **What are some of the things we have heard from the Community?**

*To Executive Director: So good to hear the funding for an Aboriginal outreach elders navigator has come through! As I've heard nothing but great things about the Sasamans Elders group you've put together! The service and commitment to community you and your staff provide is so appreciated, and I thank you for all your hard work. "Chief"*

### **Aboriginal Youth Navigator Program**

*"...Thank you for all of your support. I don't think I would have my head on straight if I didn't have your support...so thank you for everything that you continue to do for me...it means a lot..." Youth 18 years old"*

*"thanks for putting up with my stuff"*

**Elders comments:**

*These workshops have given us the opportunity to learn new methods of coping with our trauma and also has given us the opportunity to talk about issues we are concerned about and move forward to making a difference.*

*For the past several years I have enjoyed being in the Elders Program with Sasamans Society. The facilitators have given me the skills to learn and to cope with issues that may arise, the self-esteem and the respect for others. The confidence for public speaking in meetings or other functions. So I am able to help support the families in need when asked. I feel that this is a very important organization for Elders.*

*I just really appreciate what Sasamans is doing for us Elders that aren't able to get to the doctor or look after all our medical needs. Nobody in my family has a car and sometimes I am too sick to take the bus. Since Sasamans Society has hired Niki I am feeling way better because I have someone making sure I get to my dr. appointments and get all tests and prescription's when I need them Thank you for all you are doing for us!!!*

*I feel like in the 4 years we have been meeting with this group we have had a lot of growth! Some of us have always had a voice but I am so proud of a couple of our group members in particular! When they started they were so quiet. Didn't say anything! Now we can HEAR THIR VOICES!! Our Sasamans Elders group is so supportive of one another! We give each other support and build each other up with the tools we have been given in our Workshops and training. We know now after all the work we have done that we CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!! And we are READY to Help!!*

*The Courtenay Aboriginal Family Navigator service offers much needed support to members in the community in times of stress, when dealing with the Ministry of Children and Family Services. We have very much appreciated the society's support through our situation and are hopeful of a just resolution early next year in court. I can't say enough about these three Sasamans Society workers, their support has been unwavering and it is greatly appreciated.*

**Cultural Connections:**

*"Seeing my entire family tree was amazing, after losing a lot of culture and family with residential schools, it was great to see it all again"*

*"The resources in the Cultural Packages are amazing and I can't wait to go through with them with our child and learn more about their culture together"*

*" Looking forward to opening and exploring the avenues to ensure that the children do not lose their heritage and retain their culture"*

*"It is through building these connections and staying aligned in the good work we are doing that our children, youth, families and communities will be best served. I see this work as part of the greater healing and taking steps to end the cycle of loss. I raise my hands to each of you and the work you are doing!"*