

Caring For Our Own Children

Voices of Our Communities



Dzawada'enuxw First Nation

To the Dzwada'enuxw People

Gi'lakas'la for allowing us to visit your territory to speak with your youth, adults, and Elders. This document attempts to reflect your community's wisdom.



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PART 1: SASAMANS SOCIETY



Sasamans Society Overview

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 16 community representatives from our partnering communities and organizations.

Sasamans was funded through Ministry of Child & Family Development under the Indigenous Approach to co-develop creative traditional service delivery models that meets the needs of our communities.

The work undertaken by Sasamans is designed to identify the gaps in service and complement the Aboriginal Urban agencies and/or First Nations Bands.

We measure our accomplishments by the success we achieve in balancing our limited resources with the needs of the communities we serve. We do this by identifying high priority COMMON needs across our various communities.

Member Nations

- Kwakiutl Band
- Da'naxda'xw Awaetlala First Nation
- Dzawada'enuxw First Nation
- Kwikwasut'inuxw/Haxwa'mis Tribe
- Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw First Nation
- Quatsino First Nation
- We Wai Kai First Nation
- Wei Wai Kum First Nation
- K'omoks Band
- Tlatlasikwala First Nation
- Mamalilikulla-Qwe'Qwa'Sot'Em Band
- Whe-la-la-U Area Council

Urban Aboriginal Organizations

- Laichwiltach Family Life Society
- Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre
- Wachiy Friendship Centre
- Upper Island Women of Native Ancestry



OUR MISSION

In pursuit of our vision to strengthen our children and families in a community-driven and culturally appropriate manner, the Sasamans Society will respectfully:

- Appreciate and nurture the strengths and capacities of our people.
- Communicate and engage, openly and on an ongoing basis.
- Honour our traditions, customs, and beliefs.
- Involve the voices of our children and the wisdom of our Elders.
- Commit to learning from one another.
- Dedicate ourselves to achieving our short- and long-term goals.

OUR VALUES

We strive to openly demonstrate Trust, Honesty, Respect, Integrity, Values, and Empathy in achieving our goals.

We believe in practicing compassion, transparency, honesty, and accountability.

We will respect and practice equality for all.

We believe that we are all one and we strive to be inclusive at all levels as we walk and talk with honour.

We embrace and nurture the strengths and abilities of our people.



PART 2: VOICES OF OUR COMMUNITIES

Our children and our families are the cornerstone of our Nations' futures.

The Process and The Reports

This report is one in a series that presents key findings from information gathered through a community engagement process with the First Nations and Aboriginal organizations served by Sasamans Society. This particular report presents findings from information gathered from the Dzawada'enuxw people of Kingcome Inlet.

The purpose of these reports is to provide each community and/or agency with information that reflects the views expressed by community members through individual conversations, group discussions, and surveys. These reports will inform community committees as they engage in a dialogue with Sasamans Society to identify and design services to support family wellness and keep children out of government care.

The first focus of our community engagement process was to gather information from the youth. The following topics were developed from data collected from youth at the Painting Our Way and Maya'xala youth gatherings in March 2011:

- Community
- Culture
- Family
- Challenges
- Strengths
- Activities
- Keeping children out of care
- Other

These themes are providing the foundation for community engagement sessions with children, youth, parents, and Elders. First, the Sasamans team developed guiding questions about these topics to pose in individual conversations and group discussions. Next we developed work plans to guide the collection of information from our 15 member communities (12 First Nations and 3 urban Aboriginal organizations).

In July 2011, due to internal changes in the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), the work of Sasamans Society was suspended until a new work plan and budget could be developed. This resulted in a reduction in the number of communities taking part in the process,¹ a downsizing of Society staff and contractors, and a change to our community engagement process. Where initially one person was hired for each community as a community-based collaborator (CBC), the new budget and work plan necessitated a shift to a team approach with one team member (facilitator) focusing on one of three groups (children and youth, parents, and Elders) in all of the selected communities.

¹ Dzawada'enuxw First Nation, Quatsino First Nation, We Wai Kai First Nation, and Wachiay Friendship Centre were selected for completion during the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Funds were sufficient to gather information from two additional communities (Whe-la-la-U Area Council and Laichwiltach Family Life Society).

Beginning in August 2011, Sasamans staff and the facilitators (hereafter called the Sasamans team) participated in a three-part training which included community outreach and recruitment, ethical guidelines and procedures, culturally grounded facilitation and data collection methods, individual and group interviewing techniques, field and observation notes, and analysis and evaluation of findings.

After the training, the Sasamans team visited the six communities to build relationships and invite community members to participate in providing information. In some situations, community frontline workers were engaged to coordinate events designed to connect the team with the community so that the team could provide information on the process and arrange meetings with potential participants.

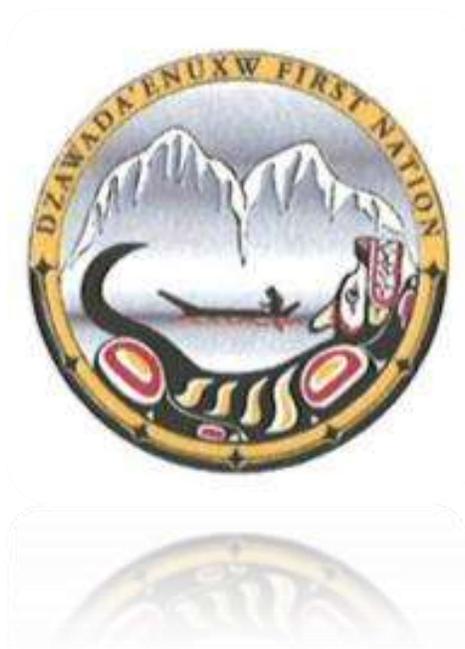
One of the lessons we learned early on was about the use of language. When we began our search for participants, our flyers and presentations often used the terms individual interviews and focus groups. We received feedback that some community members felt intimidated by these terms or were tired of being analyzed by researchers, with the result that some people would not participate in providing information. This feedback allowed us to change our language to use less formal words such as chat, discussions, or conversations. We also decided to offer an anonymous survey as another option for individuals to participate in providing information.

With the participants' permission, the individual and group conversations were recorded and later transcribed. All participants received gifts of appreciation from Sasamans Society. The Sasamans team carefully read the transcripts looking for trends and important information regarding the communities' views on the topics identified above.

In the next stages of the process, Sasamans will present the key findings to each of the participating communities at a community event, and the community will assess the draft reports and work with the Sasamans team to identify their specific community needs. Ultimately, this work will result in community-owned child and family wellness plans aimed at supporting the development of healthy families and keeping children out of government care.

In the following section of the report, we present our conversations with the Dzawada'enuxw people.

PART 3: DZAWADA'ENUXW FIRST NATION



Community Summary

The Dzawada'enuxw First Nation of Kingcome Inlet is an isolated coastal community with a population of about 450 (94 on reserve and 357 off reserve). The community is accessible only by boat or seaplane.

Living in a small, remote community poses many challenges, and both the legacy of residential schools and the ongoing effects of colonization reverberate through the generations. Nevertheless, the Dzawada'enuxw are a resilient, proud people with strong family values. At the present time, no children that live Kingcome Inlet are in care.

Through our community engagement process, the Sasamans team met with a good representative sample of the Dzawada'enuxw people, including:

- 13 children (ages 7–11) in focus groups
- 7 youth (ages 12–18): 5 in a focus group and 2 in individual conversations
- 4 parents in 3 individual conversations
- 5 Elders in individual conversations

In addition, anonymous surveys were completed by 3 youth, 5 parents, and 2 Elders. The results indicate that learning about culture is important to every age group in the community. The parents who were surveyed feel there are not enough cultural activities for families or activities for youth. Both of the Elders surveyed speak the Dzawada'enuxw language frequently and know a lot about their culture. Both would like to support youth and spend time with them. The complete survey results are included in the report appendices.

Sasamans was encouraged by the community's active participation in the information-gathering process and appreciated the open and heartfelt responses to our questions.

Key Findings

1. Preserving and strengthening the Dzawada'enuxw language and culture, both for the current generations and those in the future, is seen as essential to the community's health and well-being.
2. The Elders of the community deeply want to contribute their knowledge and wisdom to the community.
3. The community's children and youth demonstrate a great interest in their culture and an affinity and respect for the Elders.
4. The community identified a need for a place where they can come together for cultural learning, recreation, and celebration.

5. Drug and alcohol abuse has been identified as a concern in the community. Support is needed to assist people with their addictions and to explore healthier choices with the community's youth.
6. Isolation, stress, and trauma are recognized as underlying causes of drug and alcohol abuse in the community; consistent support is needed to address their effects.

Service Gaps

1. Drug, alcohol and counseling for both youth and adults.
2. Mental health counseling with a holistic approach for both youth and adults.
3. Parenting programs.
4. Advocacy for parents and grandparents who have children in care away from the community.
5. Cultural programs from the children and youth.

Community Profile

The Dzawada'enuxw First Nation of Kingcome Inlet is an isolated community with travel in and out by seaplane or by boat only. Their community, Ukwanalís Village, is based alongside the Gwa'yi (Kingcome) River on the mainland in a glacier fed river valley, surrounded by tall mountains, across from the Northern tip of Vancouver Island.

Dzawada'enuxw First nation, has an on reserve population of about 94 and an off reserve population of about 357 totalling 451 band members. During the summer months the community population increases as older youth return home after the school term, and seasonal workers return home as well.

Dzawada'enuxw First Nation on reserve			
Ages	Totals	Male	Female
0-6	14	7	7
7-12	14	6	8
13-18	8	3	5
16-54	38		
55-64	12	7	5
65+	8		

At the heart of the Village you will find the qutsi (Bighouse) Himanis. In the Kwak'wala language Himanis means “standing forever”.

Another important place within the community is Lilawagila School. The school offers



the Little Wolf Headstart program for ages 2-5, a Primary classroom from Kindergarten to grade 4 and an intermediate classroom from grade 5 through 7. For these young ones Lilawagila School provides cultural teachings, Kwak'wala language skills and an academic education. In later years the older youth go to boarding homes in other communities for their education or take home schooling.

Maya'antl Youth Group

The Maya'antl Youth Group started about six years ago. The Youth, who live in community, get involved in various activities. They meet weekly to do their activities and invite the elders, as mentors, to be involved as much as possible. Previous activities included a trip to the West coast Cultural Night in Vancouver, cultural food gatherings, and as a group they fundraised for some of the activities.

Each summer they host a Youth Conference. The conference is growing in popularity with youth from other communities. At the conference they try to use their own resources, such as cedar bark weaving, berry picking/jarring, medicinal medicine harvesting, plus they have workshops on STD's, Alcohol and Drug awareness, Life skills.

Community Health Centre

The Community Health Centre is one of the main gathering places used in the Village. The Centre has a Health Team, consisting of a doctor and a few nurses who travel in twice a month. Services delivered on a bi-monthly basis include: a Community Kitchen Nutrition program for Elders and chronic patients that offers them help with their shopping, gives information on nutrition and cooking; a Diabetes Wellness program and an Alcohol & Drug Counsellor provides support to those in need. Once a month a Young Girls group meets with a nurse to discuss different topics and do activities. Also, the Health Centre is open every day for community use of the CAP program computers and for various annual events such as Halloween, Christmas, New Years, Easter and Aboriginal Day Celebrations.



Other places of interest to community members are the Band Office/Finance building, the Post Office, and a small mill. The Band employs 20 full time and 6 to 10 part-time and casual employees.

Community Engagement Process

WHAT STEPS WERE TAKEN?

In August 2010, the Executive Director of the Sasamans Society, in accordance with First Nations protocol and tradition, asked permission of the Dzawada'enuxw Chief and council to work with the community. They agreed; a band council resolution was signed in December 2010 and a band member was appointed to sit on the Sasamans board.

The community experienced a devastating flood in the fall of 2010, and Sasamans' Executive Director and Chair made a second visit to Kingcome Inlet in January 2011. Elders, council members, frontline workers, and community members were present. The group had many concerns on how their children away from the village are being treated in government care and how difficult it is to convince MCFD to give custody of the children to the grandparents. There was a high level of frustration with the current child in care system and a strong desire to gain control over their children in government care.

Sasamans Society collaborated with the Dzawada'enuxw First Nation health director to hire a facilitator in June 2011.

There was an intention for the facilitator to be introduced to the community and attend the youth conference hosted by the community's Maya'antl Youth Group in July 2011. However, plans for community involvement were delayed when MCFD changes required Sasamans to complete a review of the community engagement process and make changes to the work plan and budget. After the changes were made, the facilitator completed a two-day training session in mid-August to develop facilitation skills for individual and group discussions. Once the training was completed, the community engagement process began. A number of events that fall, including bad weather, flooding, potlatches, and funerals, challenged the process, which included the following activities:

- Flyers were posted.
- Members of the Sasamans team attended community dinners, participated in community fundraisers, and went door to door to meet community members.
- Consent forms were distributed to allow for children and youth to participate in discussion groups.
- The community youth worker held a wiener roast for children and youth.
- The Sasamans facilitator met with the children and youth to build relationships while making pizza.
- Individual and group conversations took place, as described below.
- Surveys were distributed to interested parties.

In November, tapes of the conversations were sent to be professionally transcribed. In December, the Sasamans team met and began the process of reading the transcripts to identify the key themes and write the first draft of this report. From this work, the team discovered a great deal of rich information about the past, present, and future life of the Dzawada'enuxw people.

WHO DID WE TALK TO?

Children

Of the 14 Kingcome children aged 7–11, 13 took part in a group discussion where questions were asked about the community, culture, Elders, family, and activities. This discussion took place during an enjoyable session where the children were drawing pictures and eating pizza. The children demonstrated a great sense of humour and a love of doing fun activities.



Youth

A group of 5 of the community's 12 youth age 12–18 participated in a group discussion; 4 others could not participate because they had to leave the community to attend school. In addition, 2 individual conversations took place with youth. All of the youth were asked about community, culture, Elders, family, challenges they face, and partying.

Parents

The facilitator had 3 conversations with 4 parents (1 female and 3 males) in the age range of 28 to 55, the majority of whom were lifelong community members. The parents discussed their thoughts on the community; their cultural functions, activities, and teachings; and their family, youth, and Elders. The parents were also asked about obstacles that might hinder the community's ability to keep children out of care.

Elders

During a series of visits to the community, the facilitator met with 5 Elders (4 female and 1 male) in the 55–75 age range to discuss questions about the community, culture, family, youth, parents, and the challenges they faced in life. Most of the Elders had left the community to attend residential school and/or had lived elsewhere for as many as 30-plus years. All of the Elders graciously shared some stories about their lives when they were growing up and the traditional ways of their people.

Community Conversations

In this section we summarize our conversations with members of the Dżawada'enuxw community. To maintain the integrity of the wisdom shared by community members, direct quotes are used as much as possible. In a few cases, quotes have been slightly changed to make them more readable or to avoid identifying any individual.

Building on the themes identified in the data collected from youth at the Painting Our Way and Maya'xala youth gatherings in March 2011, we have organized the community conversations under the following headings: *community, culture, family, youth, parents, Elders, challenges faced by community members, and community wisdom regarding wellness.*

COMMUNITY

From the children to the Elders, people in Kingcome Inlet enjoy living there “*because it's beautiful*”; “*it is quiet*”; and there are “*friends, family, and nature.*” One Elder said:

I've lived in Kingcome all my life.... The best thing I like about Kingcome? Well, it's nice and quiet for one thing, peaceful. Yeah, I love the beautiful mountains and the scenery.



A number of positive comments were offered about the community. A parent stated: “*I like how, whenever things are at their worst, the community will be at their best.*” Another parent said, “*You know, just know that you're safe ... safe in your own community.*” A youth identified the pleasure of being able to “*just hang out and talk,*” while both adults and youth said they enjoy community dinners: “*Everybody within the community ... takes time out of their day to have community dinners, functions.*”

A sense of “*being one as a community*” was highlighted that included not only people, but the land and the environment. The Elders expressed a strong sense of identity with the Dżawada'enuxw traditional territories. One youth talked about “*hunting and giving [the meat] away and keep[ing] it for [his] family.*” One person's father and uncle had passed on hunting skills and “*how to respect the guns, the rifles ... how to respect the*

animals that I hunted.” For this particular parent, the best thing about being part of the Kingcome community were the cultural roles given to each person.

Although the sense of community is strong, some concerns were expressed. For parents, these included the decline in gatherings (*“they used to have community dinners all the time, but now it’s just not so often”*) and the presence of band politics (*“a lot of controversy in regards to our administration”*).

One youth talked about wanting the community to be free of litter and suggested *“more garbage cans.”* Another identified overcrowded or inadequate housing as a problem for some families. To cope with the lack of space at home, this youth *“would be out a lot.”*

Some parents and Elders expressed a wish for their community to be *“alcohol and drug free.”* One parent said they are afraid their children might be influenced by alcohol and drugs, while another commented that *“it’s a choice, and they have to make that choice themselves.”*

The community’s isolation presents many challenges. Supplies and services are expensive and obtaining them is time consuming. As a result, the people of Kingcome Inlet live a more traditional life than many of their urban counterparts. For example, gathering and processing food using traditional methods such as canning, pickling, smoking fish, and baking bread is an important part of life that requires significant amounts of time and effort. The people are very busy making sure their families have life’s basic necessities. One Elder observed:

Right after the flood, of course, there was so many different contractors in and out of here and they were amazed, just, you know, our lifestyle up here and what we had to do to survive. A lot of them are amazed, I guess, so today it’s just a everyday thing. A lot of it costs money and a lot of us don’t have a lot of money. We do our best here to get by and help people out.



The isolation of Kingcome Inlet was in some ways a saving grace during the time of enforced residential schooling. One Elder was hidden from the authorities and was able to escape being sent to residential school until the age of 14. This allowed the Elder to become fluent in the language and protocols of the Big House.

Another advantage of isolation in the past was the community’s ability to manage its affairs without the involvement of outside authorities. For example, an Elder remembers that potlatches were held even though they were illegal: *“I was fortunate enough to be home until I was eight years old, and even though our culture on the whole was ... we were not allowed to practice it ... we still held a lot of potlatches in Kingcome and Gilford.”*

The feast system played a key role in solving problems in the community. As this Elder recalls:

I was probably only seven. I didn't understand what the problem was that they had to solve... They would, before doing anything, have a feast. Everyone was fed.... They would put the problem on the floor and you always used the talking stick and the only person that could speak was the person that had the talking stick. And the problem was presented to the people and then there was a call out for ... you know, it's like saying, "What do you think? Who would like to address this?" And a person usually would stand up if they had something to say and would take the talking stick to them, so it could go on for hours. I remember as a child it seemed like a long, long time.... I think it went quite late, but after they finished they would do some dancing.

Many community members have lived away from Kingcome for parts of their lives. Life in an urban environment offers higher education and various opportunities, but it also presents many challenges. For example, a parent who had lived in the city said, "*I ... hung out with the wrong people.... I acquired an addiction through it*" but having found the way back, was thankful for the community, which has "*taught me there's another way ... thankfully for this place, there is another way out.*"

All who have returned to Kingcome feel blessed to be home. One Elder shared:

Even today, I don't like it out there.... I'm like my grandson – as soon as we leave, "Let's go home," he says. I can't seem to sleep anywhere else when we go. So I'd rather be home.... I feel safer when I'm at home.

For some Elders, their early removal from the village resulted in the loss of language and subsequently the ability to teach the language to the generation that followed, who are now parents. One Elder expressed regret about this loss, saying, "*I would love to become fluent again in my language.*"

The people of Kingcome have survived many hardships throughout the history of colonization, including colonization itself and the legacy of the residential school system. They understand that these hardships have caused intergenerational traumas resulting in addictions, violence, and overwhelming feelings of loss and grief for their culture, their language, and their loved ones. In the wake of these hardships and the recent devastating floods, Dzawada'enuxw First Nation is rebuilding its homes, its culture, and the wellness of the community. The opportunity for Kingcomites to assume responsibility for their own well-being is a cause for hope. In the words of one Elder, "*I'm really hopeful that ... with our taking responsibility with our health programs that we can highlight the healing and wellness aspect and really get moving in this community.*"

CULTURE

Cultural pride was evident throughout the conversations. One youth noted, “When my band’s name is mentioned, I feel pride.” An Elder observed:

We’ve always been a very strong Nation. One of the things that makes me really proud is that the majority had to live out in the outside world because there’s really no employment anymore. We don’t have our fishing the way we used to, or trapping, clam digging – all those things have just gradually decreased through the years. But it has always amazed me how strong our people are. How strongly they identify to Kingcome even though they may not have been born here, but because their parents were born here, or their grandparents were born here, they know what being a Kingcomite, as we say, [is]. It is very strong and it has made me proud.

A parent defined culture as “a practice of our traditional heritage” that includes “music, harvesting, stories.” This parent has been “practicing traditional songs and learning basically by myself from the music book.” The parent’s mother taught traditional healing practices and the parent has been practicing traditional medicines for ten years. Another relative was a storyteller, and an uncle had taught the parent a sacred song.



A parent who had spent many years outside the community and did not have daily exposure to cultural activities said they had

[tried to learn and do] as much as possible.... It’s just having a background and having a culture that you can be thankful for, compared to most that have no culture and just live day to day life without it.... Just knowing where you come from and where you belong is pretty important, too.

A parent talked about learning cultural teachings from the grandmother who taught “how to love and respect people ... and also to respect our culture.” This parent also learned a lot from the Elders while growing up – traditional skills like fishing, preserving, and berry picking – and still uses those skills today and would like to pass them on.

None of the parents believe that the community’s youth are ashamed of being First Nations; in fact, they provided many examples of how the youth are proud and excited to share their cultural background through participation in activities, workshops, and annual conferences. One parent observed that “a lot of youth are actually really interested in the culture, which is impressive compared to my generation.” Another parent added:

I think a lot of the youth ... for example ... my children, they’re more ... than willing to do what they are taught.... And what they know now, they could go out there and do whatever it is, especially dancing and singing.... It’s very powerful, especially to see in the little ones ... that are committed to our culture.

While the parents do not believe the youth are ashamed of learning their culture, one parent noted that *“their extracurricular activities ... using drugs, smoking pot, drinking ... that’s the thing that’s holding them back from ... wanting to learn culture.”*

The community’s Elders feel the culture is experiencing growth, especially with the interest and participation of the youth. They have seen the youth working hard to learn the songs, dances, language, and traditions of the Dzawada’enuxw First Nation. One youth noted that learning the traditional songs and dances through cultural activities is very important so the *“culture can last longer. So it can (be) passed on.”*

All of the parents interviewed had participated in cultural activities. They provided various examples of using cultural teachings in their daily lives, and they all believe that these practices and teachings have helped them make good decisions.



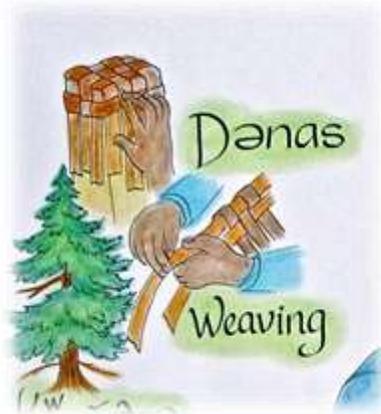
The Need for Cultural Programming

The parents all identified a need for *more* cultural programming for youth, and most commented on the lack of cultural teachers and building space to provide these programs. One parent stated: *“Nobody’s here to ... really wanna get out there and do it.”* This parent would like to *“bring somebody in that knows”* the cultural traditions to continue teaching the youth how to sing and dance.

In the past, the community did have someone who taught the children; prior to that, one parent observed, *“my son ... didn’t even know how to dance. Now ... when I watched him come out ... that just blew me away ... I just wanted to cry ‘cause he did it ... so perfectly.”*

This parent feels disappointment that there is an expectation to be paid for teaching cultural traditions rather than doing it from the heart: *“That was never done before ... we never asked for money ... even today ... you wanna go out and people want money all the time.”*

In one parent's opinion, the youth would like more cultural activities, and several youth expressed an interest in learning about their culture. One youth talked about knowing "a bit" of the language and loving the dancing, but in the words of another, "They don't have good Kwak'wala teachers or cultural teachers anymore."



When asked what kind of cultural programs for adults they would like to see in the community, one parent said they would like to see more story nights with Elders. Another mentioned carving and blanket making, while another would like to learn singing and then help the youth:

I'd like to learn singing just to see the children up here performing.... And have somebody willing to ... sit there and sing with them so they can dance and learn too.

A sense of urgency and perhaps a fear of loss of culture can be seen in the words of one parent, who remarked:

More cultural programs would be beneficial to the community because we are still trying to reclaim our culture that we lost.... And even with what we do have, there's not enough cultural programs to keep the culture we do have intact, so unless we do that, it will begin to fade away.

Preventing the loss of culture is a challenge due to a lack of a consistency in cultural programming. Recently, two local people were hired to teach the culture, and it is hoped that programs like this will not suffer from inconsistent funding. An Elder remarked:

We know that consistency is one of the strongest motivations for any group to happen. If you say you're going to meet together once a week, you need to be consistent with that because once you stop being consistent, the young will lose interest.

Language and Culture

The community attempts to keep the culture and language alive with the limited resources available through a Kwak'wala school curriculum that was designed and created by community members. An Elder talked about developing this curriculum:

In 1995 ... we worked on a Kwak'wala curriculum guide. We even had themes for every month ... started the themes in autumn.... In October it was the family, we concentrated on the family ... always try to keep it going in a cycle so that we don't forget.... To me it's important to teach our children who they are, where they come from and to never forget where they come from.



The Elders feel a sense of urgency with regard to preserving the language and the traditions of the Big House. Few fluent speakers of the language are left, and while one Elder noted that “*we’ve got a few good teachers left,*” as time goes on, fewer Elders will remain who possess the wisdom and knowledge of the traditional ways.

Parents, too, fear losing the Elders before they are able to pass on their knowledge to the youth. In one parent’s words, “*a lot of our fluent speakers ... are fading away pretty fast.*” This parent expressed the hope that the youth “*are willing to pick [the language] up and understand it and [are] willing to learn it so they can carry it on.*”

Even though the language and traditions are taught in the classroom, the Elders feel it’s not enough. They believe the parents have to start talking the Dzawada’enuxw language in their homes and in their community:

We are a small community. We should be able to be fully immersed in our language.... You can teach the children in school, but if it’s not ... followed up by the parents and the community members, it’s just not going to work.

Another Elder commented:

You don’t go to school to learn your birth language. You learn it as you are growing from a baby to a school age. And that’s what we needed to do here. If we were able to do it years ago when we started, we would have more fluent speakers today.

Changes in lifestyle are one of many factors that threaten the survival of the language. One parent notes:

Our lifestyle has changed dramatically. We got television, we got electricity, we have so many other options besides sitting with, amongst each other and communicating and talking with each other.... In the olden days, all our people potlatched all year long.... That’s all they did was speak our language, they [didn’t] speak English.... [Now] our whole community speaks English. And 50 years ago, all you would speak was ... our language, and now there’s maybe 10% of our four tribes that can only speak ... our language.... And that’s pretty sad, considering.

FAMILY

During our conversations with members of the Dzawada’enuxw community, we heard a lot about family and how the community is connected by family ties. One parent said, “*The whole community is my family ... whenever someone needs help, the family will be there.*”

The children expressed that their families “*care about us*” and “*love us.*” One youth described a healthy family as having a clean home that was free of drugs and alcohol and had “*food in the fridge.*” The same youth identified the positive teachings of family as “*how to carry myself*” and know “*right from wrong.*” One parent whose father “*raised us up to be strong*” remarked, “*I would have probably been in jail or something if my dad wasn’t around.*”

For the parents in Kingcome, the community is literally their family and they gain strength from the support the community provides. They would like to reintroduce activities like game nights and coffee nights into the community. The parents would also like to spend more time with others in the community, including Elders and youth, to maintain the family bonds and social unity of the village.

One individual noted that relatives used to come over, have coffee, and play board games like crib and Yahtzee, but “*nobody comes around anymore*”; for this, they blamed “*the alcohol and drugs, too much TV, games ... and internet.*”

Others talked about the loss of family members who have passed away or moved to other communities. One parent recalled:

There were many people in our lives that were actually the glue in the family and whenever we lose one, the structure would fall apart and conflict would become more obvious. And often it would take time for the family to mend before it would, you know, be ... well, almost like it used to be for us.

An Elder summed up the sense of family connectedness within the community:

At times we may not agree on things or we may even have some kind of crisis happening ... in the end no matter what happens, whenever we lose anyone we are all there, you know. We're all there for each other, and that to me is the most wonderful thing. And it's amazing the things that people forgive each other for.... There's this little saying that when [Elder speaks in Kwak'wala]. And that just says we're all related, you know, we are all brothers and sisters and whenever we need each other, we're all there.



YOUTH

The Elders of Kingcome Inlet recognize and celebrate the youth. They are proud of the cultural work the youth have done and feel they are excellent role models. One Elder commented,

Our youth are taking [the culture] in hand and creating that and I'm proud of them. I think that if our youth here can be modelling for other youth out there, I think that would be great to have the youth come into Kingcome. Our youth have an annual youth conference every year and it's a phenomenal conference. It's put on by them.



One Elder shared that “*the youth in our community are always eager to learn whatever’s happening in the village, like they want to learn to work on fish and stuff ... especially the older kids. They’re across the river watching people how to make grease.*” They do observe some youth who are shy when it comes to dancing and singing, which they feel some may see as the youth not wanting to be involved. One Elder explained:

It's not so much that they're ashamed to be First Nations. I think they're just too shy to try. Yeah, and when I'm involved in that part, we don't force them. We just let them sit for a while and just observe what's happening. That's kind of how I learned, just sitting, listening, and watching. I think that is the best way.

The parents, too, are proud of the youth for their interest in community events and cultural activities. One parent is:

quite happy with and proud of the kids that are here, our youth.... I think they have the strength to be here.... I think they would be out there ... in the out world ... but they choose to be here. And they're leaders for our children.... If they weren't around, then what would be here for these children, hey?

One parent is particularly proud of the youth’s commitment to education and “*their ambition to wanna do what they wanna do*”:

I've seen a lot of them, their willingness ... to leave here to further educate themselves.... It's harder for them because ... they leave here at grade 7, they gotta go out and go to school.

Although the parents are proud of the youth, one also observed that the youth could use more activities outside of school:

I think that ... they keep to themselves.... Like before ... all the kids used to be out doing something, kicking a ball.... That's not even happening ... maybe 'cause of the weather.... They got the gym, should be used more often 'cause of the cold now.... But my kids are just home all the time, eh, and they're not doing nothing but playing games or watching TV. Nobody wants to do anything.

The Elders also expressed a few concerns about the youth. One Elder feels that youth in general tend to feel entitled, and believes this has to stop in order for the youth to become independent, both for their own sake and for the community. The Elder notes:

Our children have to absolutely not ... feel entitled.... Our young people are taught. They have to want something, they have to think about something, and go after something, they can't be just given things. And that's what we do a lot for our kids today.... It just doesn't breed independence, it breeds dependence.

One Elder sounded a cautionary note:

Our young people need to be challenged more to take on their roles and responsibility because one day they will be in our shoes. And if we don't teach them well then they're not going to be very much use to us in the future. So, if we are serious about our youth staying in the family unit we need to do a lot of teachings to do catch up. We need a lot of committed adults to help our youth to get to where they need to go.



PARENTS

Several of the Elders would like to spend more time with parents in the community and support them in their role. One Elder, for example, noted that parenting is difficult, especially for parents of young children, and the Elder would like to support parents so they feel less isolated.

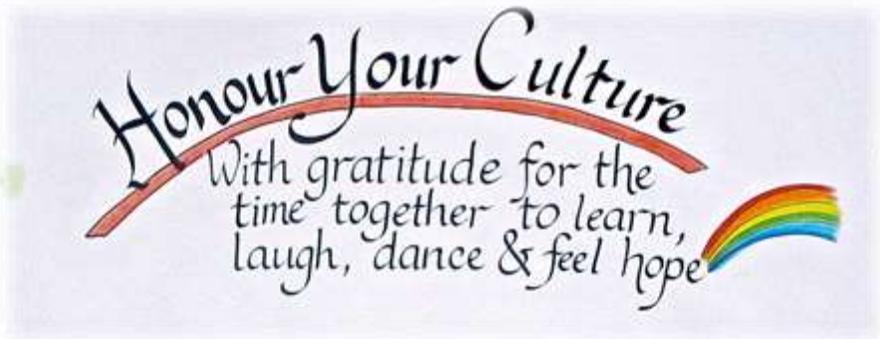
I see a single mother in the community who's always with her children, all the time. She never seems to get a break from her children. [We need to] just have more get-togethers, like an evening out or something, for tea or coffee, whatever ... just parents would be good, just to socialize.

When asked what kinds of activities they thought would be helpful to support parents, one Elder responded that they would like to “teach them how to ... some parents don't know how to teach the kids, to discipline. They just yell at them and everything.”

Some youth expressed appreciation for their parents and the useful things – such as “fish” – that they have learned from their families. Others talked about doing activities with family, like “gaming”; “swimming and stuff”; “going to the PNE”; “Disneyworld! Just kidding!” One youth remarked, with humour, “My parents are too old. They're too old. I talk to them on Facebook. I'm in my room ten feet away.” While the youth was joking around, the comment speaks to the sense of frustration that several parents and Elders expressed that technology in some ways isolates members of the community, especially the youth.

ELDERS

When asked about the Elders, the children said they enjoy spending time with Elders because “*they tell stories,*” “*they teach us,*” and “*they teach us how to draw cultural stuff.*” Several youth expressed that they enjoy doing activities and listening to stories told by the Elders. One youth said, “*I like the circles that we have once in a while. I’d like to see more than that.... Yeah, once a week would be better ... we seem to learn more when we’re with them.*”



It appeared that, before the flood in the fall of 2011, youth and Elders met often to do activities together. One youth suggested that, since then, spending time and learning from the Elders has changed, and now there are “*not really much Elders here*” in the village. However, at the annual conference the youth hosted in the summer, Elders assisted or were community resources for workshops on cedar bark weaving, berry picking and jarring, and medicinal plant harvesting.

Elders are also respected by the youth for their wisdom and knowledge of traditional laws and problem solving. When asked to describe a time when someone in the community had inspired them, one youth recalled

when a couple of our relatives went out in the wood for four days ‘cause the Elder sent them out there for drinkin’ too much.... [They were] creating too much problem.... They came back and we all, the youth, wrote letters to them.... I mostly looked up to one of them ... and he is doing better.

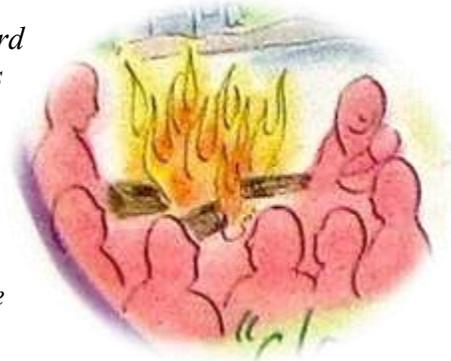
There appears to be a mutual understanding by the Elders and the young people that the old ways are valuable.

The parents also feel that the Elders are great assets to the community; they have knowledge of cultural activities and teachings which the parents would very much like to hear. One parent suggested that one way the youth and Elders could interact more would be to have the Elders help the youth at school with local history projects two to three times a month. In one parent’s words, “*One of the best qualities I see in the Elders is the knowledge that they possess for the youth.... They don’t get too much opportunity to talk about it, though.*”

The parents, too, enjoy spending time with the Elders. All of the parents would like to spend more time with them and have more opportunities to gather and share stories. One parent said *I wanna know what they've done.... A lot of time I don't even get a chance to go talk to the Elders 'cause they're so busy.... I'd like to sit there and talk to them about the past ... what they experienced in their grown up lives.... Even today I wanna learn.... There's a lot of stuff I don't even know myself.*

Another parent appreciates the Elders' life experience and willingness to help community members with personal problems:

A lot of our Elders are pretty supportive ... in regard to people that are having trouble.... If there's people having problems ... all the other Elders will get together and sit them down and try to talk to them about whatever problem they're going through ... just for support ... their words of wisdom to help.... That's quite encouraging, just to know there are people out there that are willing to talk ... and care for you.



Challenges Faced By Community Members

Education

When it came to talking about challenges faced by community members, education was a topic every parent and many of the youth were concerned about. The school in Kingcome only goes up to grade 8; after that, youth must leave the community to continue their education.

Parents recognize the need for education. One remarked:

Education is the one most thing you need in your life, to get ... to wherever you want to be in this world.

Another parent observed that *“everything's computerized now ... you just need the education to run the computer and ... everything's technology, high tech stuff,”* so not only is basic education important, advanced education might also be required to obtain employment.



However, some youth and parents fear what might happen when youth leave the community for school; one parent noted that a youngster confessed she was *“scared she'll start drinking or doing something else. And it's true ... most kids that do go out there, that's where they go at alcohol, drugs ... end up in jail.”*

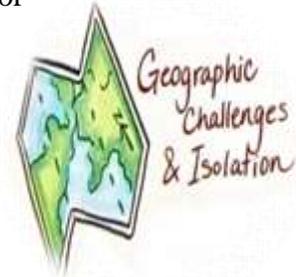
Some children have tried going to school in different communities, but have since moved back to Kingcome and are now being home schooled. One parent stated: *“They'd rather be home than ... out there.... They're more used to being around people here that they know.”*

Another parent was concerned about the lack of basic education in the village and feared that, *“if they stay here ... not very many of them continue forward with their education.”*

One Elder shared a frustration for the youth and their education:

I know some of the students up here get awfully frustrated when there isn't enough help for their education. Or there is some help for education but the youth are kind of ignored. Literally ignored. And that really bugs me.

The youth have mixed feelings about leaving the community for schooling. Some youth may feel isolated from their families and community and stressed by living in a new place and attending a new school, while others may find relief in being away from social, community, and family issues. One youth said, “Technically, you’re here all your life and you finally want to move on to a new chapter, like move out of here and start a new life.” Another youth responded, “Just wait until you want to leave here and then ... you’re gone for a week and you’re homesick and you can’t wait to come home.”



Another youth suggested a solution: “Get another high school here” and then “the people who don’t want to move away” could “stay here and go to school.”

Housing

Several Elders identified safe housing as an issue in Kingcome. For example, one Elder said,

I’ve been out of [my home] for four years. It was under renovations. They kept saying it is going to be fixed. The money is here for whatever, and it never happened. It took the flood to get my house fixed. It was really stressful.

The recent flood devastated much of the community’s housing; many homes in the village have to be extensively renovated and raised to a higher level, and some Elders feel that it is taking a long time for housing issues to be addressed.

Discrimination

Discrimination was mentioned in the many conversations; there is recognition that discrimination exists. However, no concrete examples were given, and the Elders feel that it is not a huge concern for the community. One Elder defined discrimination as “one race against the other” but noted “we have discrimination probably in all villages between families.”

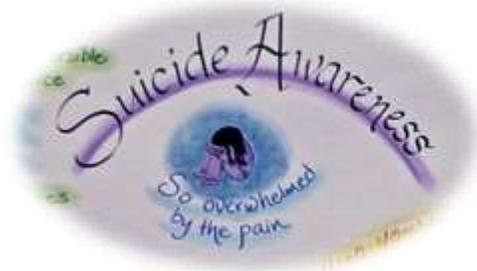
Another Elder believes that communities can overcome discrimination:

I see it, and we do have some discrimination in the community. And I think it’s something that in time can be addressed if we can truly learn who we are and where we came from, and that’s up to the individual. It’s up to everyone to find out who they really are and where they come from and where they’d like to go, but also to realize that in our life there is a ... powerful relief ... in the present moment.... We each live one day at a time. We can’t do anything about what’s happened in the past, really, except if we have hurt anyone then it’s up to us ... but also we can’t foresee the future.

Stress and Trauma

Many people in the community are affected by stress and trauma. In the words of an Elder,

Our traumas have affected us time after time after time. It just builds and builds. Like, I almost say that we have generational traumas that have followed us. Like loss of language and culture, like the Great Deaths, like the residential schools. But now you have individual traumas that follow us. We have the suicides, we have the AIDS, we have, you know, everybody is affected by something that they carry themselves – the deaths in their family, the premature deaths of their grandparents or the parents. A lot of our people have died drowning.... It was horribly traumatic in this community.



The Elders identified a number of issues that cause stress in the community: the removal of children by government, the struggle grandparents face in getting custody of or access to their grandchildren, the death of loved ones, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, the presence of a bootlegger and drug trafficker in the community, differences in opportunities between families, a housing shortage and renovations, geographic isolation, and personal traumas that people have had to endure due to colonization, in particular the residential school legacy. While the Elders agree that every person has to deal with stress, they note that certain stresses seem to be greater for some people. For example, one Elder feels that the stress of band politics can lead people to negative activities: *“It could drive them to drink or whatever ... drive them to do negative stuff.”*

A particularly difficult challenge is losing a family member. One Elder identified this as one of the toughest things a person will go through, saying, *“I lost my husband.... I lost my daughter, then another daughter. That’s the hardest you can face in life is losing your child.”*

When asked about the biggest stress they had dealt with, one parent replied:

The residential behaviour of those who have survived residential school, my father being one of them. And my mom was never a residential survivor but she had basically the same attitude which was, you know, even when me and my sisters were right, we were still wrong in their eyes.... The residential legacy is passed on to each kid ... and you know it’s hard to break the cycle.

Currently, there are no professional counsellors in the community, and one parent stated: *“It’d be good to have somebody come in and talk to them ... every other week would be fine.”*

Drug and Alcohol Addiction

Clearly drugs and alcohol are causing problems in the community. An Elder noted: *“I wish I could change the parties that happen in the village.... In the 1960s we had a dry village.”*

Some of the parents and Elders who were interviewed have had problems in the past with alcohol and drug abuse. One parent shared that *“after my counselling and that and seeing the relief in my family now that I’m sober, I know I’ve done a lot more damage to my community instead of myself when I was drinking.”* Another parent who is now sober tells the children,

“Look at me. I’m having a tough life because of alcohol problem. What it done to me.” Now that I quit ... it seems to have affect me more.... I always told my kids, don’t go that far. Please don’t go there. And it hurts so much.

One Elder mentioned having custody of their grandchildren *“who was taken away by welfare ‘cause their mother was drunk all the time.”* Another spoke of the trauma caused to the community by drugs and alcohol abuse:

It is a big part of a person’s life. It doesn’t just impact them, right? It impacts the whole, just the whole family structure, and family, friends. It is a tough issue to address.

For the Kingcome youth, the use of drugs and alcohol appears to be either a normalized behaviour or one where there is a need for help. Opinions varied; one youth stated in the group discussion that *“we have parties every weekend, but not for teenagers.”* Another youth in the group interjected the name of a person who had included teenagers at a party. At this point, the facilitator observed that one youth’s verbal and body language conveyed to the others that the conversation was to go no further. As a group, the youth expressed that they do not see too much drinking, drugging, and partying going on around them or that safety is a concern. In the words of one youth, *“People just kinda drink and then stay at the house they’re drinking at most of the time.”*

In individual conversations, however, some youth allowed that *“yeah”* there are situations where *“minors and adults”* party together. One youth thought that the use of drugs and alcohol by minors and adults was clearly a problem and rated this issue at *“about a 7”* out of 10, while another, when asked how much of an issue it was, replied, *“Lots.”* One youth described bad things that might happen while partying: *“You could never wake up again if you blacked out. And rape. A lot of suicide.”*

Some of the parents said they knew about occasions when youth had partied with young adults. One parent stated, *“I believe it’s a huge issue ... just ‘cause of the damage that the partiers give to their family and all that stress just worrying about it.”*

A parent noted that *“the band does take a couple steps just to make sure people are safe, if they’re in danger.... They’ve got first responders and medical workers.”* Another parent would like the community to *“take a more aggressive approach dealing with the bootleggers and drug dealers”* by increasing the amount of law enforcement in the community.

All of the Elders expressed concern about the youth and their partying. One Elder feels it is important to continue helping the youth to make healthier choices:

I don't think our children are hopeless. Yeah, they've got a chance in their lives 'cause they do know what's good and what's bad. Of course they have that choice.... I think we could try and help them along the way.

Depression and Suicide

Many community members have relations who have committed suicide. This social issue causes great stress for the Elders, one of whom could only say, with enormous emotion, “*The suicide really bothers me.*”

In relation to youth suicide and depression, some parents observed that youth might feel alone. One said:

I do believe that there are some people who do feel alone, and in many ways they are.... It could be because they don't want people in their lives, they're afraid to allow people into their lives.

Another parent felt that a lot of youth may feel lonely because they “*shelter themselves ... up here 'cause there's not enough activities to do.*”

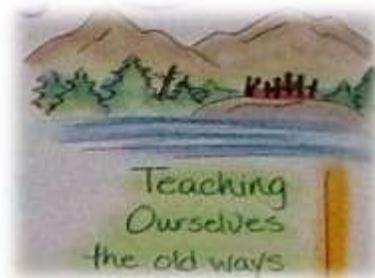


Some parents could relate to feelings of depression and suicide. After the suicide of a family member, one parent said, they “*wanted to do the same ... 'cause he was gone. I wanted to go,*” but they realized “*there's no sense in going that far.*” Another parent commented, “*Yeah, I can relate too 'cause I've gone through my own depression as a teenager.*” That individual was able to get through their depression “*because I had a lot of good teachers and friends in my life.*” The parent suggested, “*More community involvement in our youth would actually show them, you know ... it's not going to be so hard as long as you got the right people.*”

COMMUNITY WISDOM REGARDING WELLNESS

It was apparent in the conversations that a great deal of wisdom exists in the community regarding what the people want and need to strengthen and support their families' wellness. Woven throughout the dialogues were both a sense of the importance of knowing who you are and an acknowledgment of the need for more involvement with those who know the culture; these two things appear to be viewed as crucial for fostering a healthy community.

Other needs that community members identified include *support for family wellness*, including alcohol and drug addiction; *more activities and facilities*, particularly ones that revitalize the Dzawada'enuxw language and culture; *positive role models, communication and connection*, and *a return to traditional ways and values*. Each of these building blocks of health and well-being is elaborated below.



Support for Family Wellness

In response to being asked, “What do you think is needed to keep children out of care?” a parent replied:

Excessive alcoholism and drug use and that’s what usually ends up kids unfortunately in ... foster homes ... and whether or not it’s ... a direct effect ... it scars a kid ... personally for your life.

The parent noted:

There’s not enough resources to reach out to the ... for AA, NA, any of those.... There’s no outreach that you can really go out and say “Yeah look, I’m having a problem today, I need help today, I’m gonna go to a meeting today.”

The same parent stated that “*a lot of our youth drink pretty heavily [and] there’s no support for them in regards to anywhere to turn ... no counsellors, no nobody that they can connect that they want to talk with up here.*”

A youth reported that a drug and alcohol counsellor comes in only “*once in a while*” and that having help “*more than once in a while*” is needed. This youth thinks the community needs a “*treatment program, but at home*” and “*more youth stuff*” in relation to drug and alcohol use.

Any substance abuse may be considered a symptom of deeper lying issues and concerns. One Elder observed that some community members drink and use drugs as a way to cope with stress and trauma: “*We’ve gone through a lot of different things. Just seems better through alcohol and drugs, but it will still be there when you sober up.*”

Activities and Facilities

There is a general consensus that a new community hall is needed where people can meet and participate in cultural learning and other activities. According to the Elders, the old hall is not really useable and the Big House is not large enough. The interviewer noticed that the same core group of people attend regular community dinners and asked how others could be encouraged to attend more cultural activities. One respondent stated that a bigger space was required to house a larger gathering: “*People don’t go ‘cause ... their area’s too small for gatherings.*”

An Elder noted that “*a library centre ... would really be helpful.... You know, with computers they could use and stuff ... nice comfortable place for people to go to. Lounge around and read, check their Facebook and whatever they do.*”

The Elders also noted that the youth need a place to gather for recreation. One Elder said, “*We used to have good evening events that everybody would get involved in.... I wish we could get that kind of stuff back. Our kids get pretty bored up here and even when we got TV they get bored.*” Another Elder said, “*A little rec centre, I guess you might call it. That’s what I think they need. Yeah, and that’s really missed. Even I’d go there if we had it today, I’d go there, I’d spend time there.*”

The children and youth agree. Like young people everywhere, the youth of Kingcome want healthy activities, and this was reflected in their ideas about how community life

could be improved. They would like to see the soccer field repaired, a skateboard park constructed, or perhaps a swimming pool. One youth talked about wanting more indoor and outdoor activities, more soccer, and “*more night games like tag and stuff for the kids.*” Some youth mentioned not having a youth worker after the summer and identified the need for someone to supervise them so they could use the gym after hours or on weekends.

When the children were asked, “Is there anything you guys want more of in the community?” their answers included a “*sewing class,*” a “*cooking class,*” and facilities like “*a pool*” or “*a water park.*”

The parents would also like to see more game nights and “*doing craft stuff, carving ... blanket making*”; they figured that twice a month on the weekends would probably be the best time to do the activities.

All the parents agreed that increasing the amount of activities in the community would alleviate some of the stress felt by youth and provide opportunities to strengthen social bonds. In addition, the Elders know that if you keep a child busy with activities, this leaves no room for mischievous behaviour:

If we all get together and support [the children], it'll change quite a bit. Yeah, it'll change quite a bit ... get together like we used to do and talk to them and do craft nights with them ... something to do every other night will keep them out of it.



Along with physical, social, and creative activities, one parent suggested that the youth be taught traditional skills like how to harvest medicine. Another parent noted, “*There’s been many attempts on activities for this, but there’s no steady person that’s willing to take it up and ... step forward and actually put the time.*”

Another parent stated: “*The community really needs help the most ... [with] the culture.... There’s not enough teachers here to ... carry on our tradition.*” Unfortunately, the community has been without a cultural teacher for a while now; the parents would like to see more teachers and specifically “*more art teachers.*”

There is a keen interest in revitalizing the culture. One Elder commented,

We need to have more cultural things in the community because whenever we do have it, it is like the people just absorb it. It’s something that ... almost like something you hunger for.

Role Models

Several people touched on the importance of positive role models for the youth. For example, when asked their thoughts on youth seeing their parents or other adults drinking and doing drugs, an Elder said:

It goes back to role modelling. I’ve looked at it in my own family ... for those of us who don’t smoke in our family, our kids don’t smoke.... It’s just a role modelling process.

As noted above in the section on community, the modeling of traditional skills like hunting and of values like respect for animals and sharing food resources with others is significant for many community members. A youth described how parents model how to live: “[My mom] helps me somewhat every day ... just ... learning how to grow up I guess ... and what I’m supposed to do and what I’m not.”



It is not only older people who are positive role models, however. The youth in the community also play a key role as role models to the younger children and to youth from other communities through their annual youth conference.

Communication and Connection

The need for increased and improved communication was expressed in a variety of ways throughout the community conversations. One parent, for example, noted:

Just having you come out for the last little while and reaching out to people and to talk to the youth ... [being] willing to talk to the Elders ... it helps a lot of people. And just to have people out there that are ... willing to do that work and to come in on a regular basis.... I think that’s a big part of what people need up here ... having somebody that’s willing to come up and communicate with all our ... different age groups ... and see what they want.... Just to find a happy medium, and find out what everybody wants to do.

In relation to youth using alcohol and drugs, an Elder recommended communication:

Talk to them, talk to them, talk to them. Open the doors of communication, which is crucial. And, ah, how we do that? I don’t know. There’s no easy answer there. I think we’re all afraid to talk to our kids at some point when they get to be adults ... but I think you need to keep the doors open big time, and if you need help, then find help.

Parents made several suggestions for youth on coping with stress, including talking with them, talking with Elders, and talking with the spirit world. One parent related that they try to deal with family situations before they become overwhelming problems by using open communication:



Every morning we sit at the table and discuss what’s gonna go on today and ... if they feel sad or ... if they feel lonely.... So I talk to them ... explain to them that it’s ok to be sad ... it’s ok to be lonely.

Another parent described how stress affects a person’s whole life, including their body, mind, and health. If that parent personally needed someone to talk to, they would “probably talk to an Elder.” Another parent said that they confide more “in more the spiritual world of the animals and that, so I tend to spend a lot of time in the woods.”

In addition to encouraging youth to communicate more with them and other community members, parents would like a professional counsellor to come to the village to help the youth and community cope with stressful situations and lead healthier lives.

For their part, many of the Elders expressed a desire to be involved in community events. One Elder would like to “*have more get-togethers ... and talk about our future ... our children’s future ... what we are going to leave behind for them.*”

A Return to Traditional Ways and Values

Some Elders express regret about the loss of traditional values. One Elder said, “*We used to help each other, but it’s not the same.*” The person spoke of a time when there was greater sharing and more support for Elders in obtaining the basic necessities.

One Elder talked about the teachings of the Sisuitl:

The Sisuitl can teach you about stress as well as anything else that happens. There’s always good and bad things, and the choices you make in life is your own personal choices, so it’s your responsibility to choose whether it’s a stress factor that affects you negatively or it’s a stress factor that affects you positively.

This Elder noted that everyone will have stress in their life at some point; it’s how they deal with stress that is important:

They can stress out at a very early age; it’s really how you deal with it with them and you teach it as a very early age. You don’t tell them to resolve their ... you ask them “What would you do about it next time?” You know, you go through it with them so that they learn, so it’s a teaching, a teaching moment. That’s what you need to do with the youth, too. So it’s just a matter of awareness that you are going to stress out in life, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad.

Elders shared their concern for teaching traditional and basic human values to the community. They feel that once these traditions and values are taught, the people will learn to create a much healthier community for their families and for themselves. One Elder discussed the importance of self:

It is always number one. You know, concern yourself about self. Why? Because you have to give of self, that’s why. To be of service to your people. Our people don’t do that well anymore.

You know, when we were kids, no matter who they are, if they looked like [they needed] help we’d go and help them. You don’t get told to, you just do it because you were taught to do it. Today that doesn’t happen. You go into our community meetings [and] people just sit around and expect to be waited on. They don’t say “Is there anything I can do?” You aren’t entitled to be waited on hand and foot – it’s the worst thing for the human spirit. We also have to think in terms of the human spirit because that’s the biggest part of who you are, is your spirit. And if you don’t do the right things, your human spirit will let you know. You need to learn to listen to your human spirit, and that’s why you have emotions. Your

emotions are the voice to the spirit just as your physical voice is to the mental. You voice what your mental is saying, but for your human spirit, your voice for that is your emotions and most of the time we ignore our emotions....

It's important that people learn to give of self.... So that's the balance ... I think that the more we teach it, the more we practice it, it will create a better community for us....



One Elder sees strong families as the cornerstone of a healthy community:

One of my dreams is that we will have families coming back to our community and people who, who truly want to contribute to the growth of our community. I think it can happen. I think it would be a lot of work but the thing to happen now is to regain our full trust in each other. One of the teachings of our people is that they respected people's gifts and everyone is born with a gift. And the way our education system happened in the old days without the help of written words or anything was that you really observed your children. Every child that was born you watched that child, and you could identify their gift. And whatever that gift was, that's where you found somebody that could ... apprentice them.

Another Elder would like to see the Dzawada'enuxw people revitalize the language, traditions, and values that the Elders have treasured and respected throughout their lifetimes,

to have an independent community, a community that can thrive on their importance of self [and] follow the traditional laws and values of our people so that they can take it into the next seven generations. That is my dream.



PART 4: CLOSING REMARKS

It is clear from our conversations that many of the challenges our children and communities face are rooted in ongoing colonial impacts that have caused immeasurable harm to our people and disrupted our traditional way of life – a way of life that we view as key to rebuilding healthy families and communities. This broader content must be considered in moving the discussion of keeping children out of government care beyond the individual child and parent and toward an inclusive, community approach. As our Elders emphasize, our children can only be understood as part of a whole that includes their family, community, culture, and the natural environment.

The Ministry has publically stated they have failed to serve the best interests of Aboriginal children and families, in many ways it has also weakened the ability of families and communities to care for our own children. Many positive changes have been made in recent years; still, our communities must take the lead in developing holistic systems of care for our own children and families. As a first step, child welfare policies and procedures need to be changed to recognize grandparents and other relatives as the preferred caregivers for children at risk of being taken into government care. Further, our community leaders need to have a voice in any revision or development of culturally relevant policies and procedures that impact our children and families.

The conversations that took place through our community engagement process have made it abundantly clear what our people need to keep our children out of government care: stronger families, stronger communities, and stronger support networks.



APPENDICES

Youth Survey Summary

QUESTIONS	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Learning my culture is important	3				
I am able to do lots of activities on my reserve	1	2			
I feel accepted by others.	1	2			
I am learning from the Elders	2	1			
I get enough support in order to succeed at school		2	1		
I feel safe in the community	2	1			
Children in foster care are a concern for your community	1	1	1		

QUESTIONS	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I participate in cultural activities.	1	2			
I am learning my Native language.	2		1		
I am learning about my culture	2	1			
I participate in activities on my reserve			2		
I feel safe on my reserve	2	1			
I worry about life	1	2			
I feel successful	1		2		
Drugs and alcohol are having an impact on my life			2	1	

Survey Analysis

Three youth were surveyed. The surveys indicate that they strongly agree that learning about culture is important. The next strongest agreement was in the areas of learning from Elders and feeling safe. The youth also indicated that they are always or often learning about their culture. Drugs and alcohol do not frequently have an impact on the lives of these three youth.

Parent Survey Summary

QUESTIONS	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Learning my culture is important	5				
There are enough cultural activities for families in my community		1		4	
There are enough activities for youth in my community		1		4	
I would like to spend time supporting the youth of my community	4	1			
I feel accepted by others	3			1	1
Adequate support is available for adults/parents		1	1	3	1
I have adequate, safe housing	3		1	1	
Adequate support is available for youth		2		3	
Children in foster care are a concern for your community	2	1	1	1	

QUESTIONS	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I participate in cultural activities		2	3		
I am learning my Native language		2	2	1	
I participate in activities in my community		1	4		
I spend time supporting the youth in my community		2	3		
I feel safe in the community	2		1	1	1
I worry about life	2	1		1	1
Drugs and alcohol are having an impact on my life	1	1	2	1	

Survey Analysis

Five parents were surveyed. The surveys indicate that they strongly agree that learning about culture is important; however, they disagree that there are enough cultural activities for families and activities for youth. Parents agreed that they would like to spend time supporting the community's youth. Three out of five parents disagree that there is adequate support available for youth.

Elder Survey Summary

QUESTIONS	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I know a lot about my culture	1	1			
There are enough cultural activities for families in my community	1			1	
There are enough activities for youth in my community	1			1	
I would like to spend time supporting the youth of my community	2				
Adequate support is available for adults/parents	1			1	
I have adequate, safe housing	1			1	
Adequate support is available for youth	1			1	
Children in foster care are a concern for your community	1			1	

QUESTIONS	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I participate in cultural activities		1	1		
I speak my Native language frequently		2			
I participate in activities in my community	1		1		
I spend time supporting the youth of my community		1	1		
I feel safe in the community	1		1		
I worry about life	1		1		
Drugs and alcohol are having an impact on my life			1		

Survey Analysis

Two Elders in the 55–64 age range were surveyed. Both Elders would like to support youth and often spend time with youth. Both Elders speak their Native language frequently and know a lot about their culture.

This report was compiled in collaboration with Sasamans Society



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