



Sasamans Society

2017/18 AGM Report

Lori Bull, 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 Elders I & II. These were facilitated over a period of two years.

Vision Statement

Sasamans Society's **Vision** is *Strengthening "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 Society is supported and guided by our Board of Directors (BOD), comprised of community representatives from our partnering First Nation Bands and Aboriginal Urban agencies.

Our Mission

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

In pursuit of our Vision, 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 wisdom of our Elders;
- Learn from one another;
- Dedicate ourselves to achieving our short and long-term goals.

Beliefs and Values

- Every child needs someone to believe in them;
- Children and families have the right to be heard;
- All families do the best with what they have;
- Every child and their families have gifts and strengths;
- Every child deserves to be loved;
- Parents must start taking responsibility;
- Families must start taking responsibility;
- Children and their families need someone to trust.
- Children are our reason for living;
- Children are sacred;
- Children need a safe loving environment;
- Children have to be safe;
- Children belong with their family;
- Children have the right to be children;
- Children have the right to be respected;
- We are here to hold a sacred space for our children and families.

Message from Chair

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I would like to recognize our partnering organizations, member nations and surrounding communities. We have a collective vision that honours and values the health and well-being of our children, families and communities and it is with your support we are able to carry on the important work we do at Sasamans.

Throughout this past year Sasamans Society has worked diligently to increase programing and services for our communities, youth, families and Elders, Sasamans Society has seen an increase in staff since our last AGM, this is all very exciting for us. As we continue our work, our commitment has always remained with the best interest and well-being of our families and communities while keeping our children at the centre of all we do.

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the ongoing commitment and hard work of all Sasamans employees who continue to dedicate their services, skills and professionalism in the work they do within our communities, specifically with our children & youth, families and Elders and the various nations, bands and community services that we collaborate with.

Sasamans Society Board of Directors would like to formally welcome our new Executive Director, we are happy to have Lori Bull step into this position and we will continue to support her as she adjusts to her new role. We are grateful for the mentorship she has received from Pauline and expect good things for Sasamans in the years to come as we continue moving forward.

And finally on behalf of our Board of Directors I would like to acknowledge the leadership and dedication of Pauline Janyst, Executive Director for Sasamans Society for 8 years. Pauline has worked hard and committed her time and energy to build significant relationships with our community and government partners and building Sasamans to what it is today; she has built a strong platform that sustains the work we do. Thank you Pauline for your leadership, guidance and support in the important work we do, you will be missed. Enjoy your retirement!

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

Message from the Executive Director

It is truly an honour to welcome everyone to our 2018 AGM. I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Laichwiltach people. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself; my English name is Lori Bull (nee Speck) and the name given to me by my grandfather is Ik'gawaga and translates as *Abalone Woman* or *Woman of Many Colours* I am a member of the 'Namgis First Nation with ancestral ties to the Lawit'sis tribe through my father George Speck and grandfather George Speck Sr., as well as Dzawada'enuxw and Kwikwasutinux nations through my biological mother, Betty Dawson. My cultural lineages also include Irish and Jewish through my mother and Swedish through my biological father.

I have been with Sasamans Society since 2012 assisting many families in the Campbell River area in the role of Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator. In April of this year I moved into the Executive Director position. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to my predecessor and mentor, Pauline Janyst for her many years of hard work and dedication to Sasamans Society, she devoted her knowledge and expertise to building Sasamans to what it is today. During her tenure, Pauline's vision has always been committed to honouring the voices of our communities, our children, our families and our Elders as they are the knowledge keepers that guide us in the work we do. Without Pauline's knowledge and expertise, Sasamans Society would not be where we are today. I certainly have some mighty shoes to fill.

As Sasamans Society continues to move forward in our work, I am pleased to say that we are strong in our numbers as our team has almost doubled in size over the last year and we have an amazing team that is dedicated to the vision of Sasamans Society. Our work at Sasamans is enhanced through our many partnerships. Over the years, through our various programs we have nurtured many collaborative working relationships within each of the communities we work in (Campbell River, Courtenay and Port Hardy), these include but are not limited to Laichwiltach Family Life Society, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the John Howard Society, Gwa'sala-'Naxwada'xw Health Centre, KDC Health, Quatsino First Nation, Wachaiy Friendship Centre, we have also partnered with various First Nations Bands.

I would like to acknowledge our Board of Directors as they have supported me 100% from the very beginning. I am honoured and humbled to be of service to Sasamans Society, our Indigenous nations and our Indigenous children & families. I am extremely grateful for the support of our BOD, Pauline Janyst and our Sasamans staff.

I want to especially recognize the Sasamans Harmony Circle of Elders who dedicate their time and energy not just to their own healing journey but also give of themselves to support our youth and families. They have worked tirelessly and engaged in many healing and training sessions over the last 4 years. They are truly amazing people with beautiful spirits and strong voices; they are an inspiration to continue doing the work we do with our Indigenous children & families.

'Gilakas'la,



Aboriginal Outreach Family/Youth Navigators ~ funded by Aboriginal Service Innovation Funding (MCFD)/Prevention and Family Support Funding (MCFD)/Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (INAC)

Sasamans Society currently has two FT Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigators (AOFN). One is based out of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Child & Family Services office in Port Hardy and one is based out of our main office in Campbell River.

We have three FT Aboriginal Youth Navigator (AYN) positions. One AYN (position is currently vacant) is based out of Quatsino First Nation band office in Port Hardy and two AYN's are based out of our main office in Campbell River.

We have one FT employee who splits their time between both AOFN and AYN programs, providing services to Aboriginal families and youth in the Courtenay area.

The purpose of the **Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator** and **Aboriginal Youth Navigator** 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. The purpose of our work is to enhance and promote culturally safe services to our children and families who are involved with child welfare services. We are grateful for our ongoing collaborative working relationships in the communities we serve.



Cultural Connections Program ~ local MCFD region funding

The purpose of the **Cultural Connections** program is to create Cultural Plans for children in care and to assist MCFD Social Worker's to develop and implement appropriate re-unification plans and identify children for whom a return to family or community may be appropriate. Sasamans Society has one FT Cultural Connections Worker (CCW), this position is based out of Campbell River and services our catchment area which includes Gold River/Tahsis, Sayward and Quadra/Cortez Island. Our Cultural Connections worker continues to work in partnership with MCFD.

Our Cultural Connections program continues to see success in children being placed within community or extended family placements. This success is due to the outreach work the CCW conducts within community, locally and remote as she works hard to find family and community members to step forward as caregivers for children & youth in care. Additionally, the CCW has worked on many plans that will see children and youth moving out of the foster care system and moving into permanent placement.

Along with the successes, the Cultural Connections Program has faced some challenges that are systemically related, this includes the impact of intergenerational trauma associated with the Residential School System and The Sixties Scoop on our Indigenous communities and families. With many families disconnected from family, culture and community there is little knowledge of cultural roots, tracing lineage among this disconnection to community and culture remains difficult.

Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders ~ funded by First Nations Health Authority

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 Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders (AHCE) group has completed several training sessions; there has been excellent attendance at all the workshops put on by the Aboriginal Outreach Elders Navigator (AOEN). We had a minimum of 21 Elders present at any session excluding one in which we had a lot of illness where we had 16 in attendance.

The AOEN takes Elders to a variety of medical appointments, assists in finding housing, tax preparation support, budgeting and continues to support the Elders in whatever capacity they require. The Elders Navigator also meets our Elders in Courtenay once a week. The program is evolving as we move forward.

The AOEN has also assisted in connecting Sixties Scoop survivors to applicable resources providing information on the class action lawsuit and compensation being awarded to the Elders and their families affected.

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) have been working closely with the AOEN and have utilized the AHCE from Campbell River, Courtenay and Quadra Island to share their wisdom in regards to Cultural Sensitivity in conjunction with the Maternity and Emergency departments at the North Vancouver Island Hospital.

The Foundry, located at the John Howard Society has utilized Sasamans Elders 4 days per week as support to youth accessing services at The Foundry. This has proven to be a great avenue for youth and families to access support in a culturally appropriate manner.

AHCE continue to be a huge support to each other and utilize the workshops for their personal grief and healing. They voice their appreciation for this frequently.

The AHCE continues to have an active role in the community by helping facilitate workshops, giving the opening and closing prayers and welcoming the attendants to the territory when attending these meetings and workshops.

The Elders Navigator is working with 30+ Elders from both on and off reserve; they come from a variety of First Nations Bands, urban agencies, Metis and Inuit communities.

Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker ~ funded by MCFD Prevention and Family Support

The Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker (APSW) program was newly added to Sasamans programming in January of 2018. The purpose of the Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker is to provide essential and preventative support services to families identified as being in need of interventions and whose children are in government care or children who are at high risk of removal. The APSW provides intensive service through visits to the family's home and works collaboratively with the family to develop goals and activities to assist in reducing risks identified by MCFD. The worker walks alongside the parents in their efforts to accomplish the goals set out by MCFD, providing parenting knowledge, encouragement, and navigation to resources and support to build strong and healthy families. The APSW works very closely with our Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigators. While these positions work closely together they hold very different roles. Parents appreciate one on one time with the APSW as the support can be tailored to meet the family's specific needs in a way that parenting groups cannot. Families have a say in what they want out of the program, the APSW has found this works well for the participants to maintain continuity within the program as it helps to build relationships with families in a good way and from a place of empowering parents.

Sasamans currently has two FT APSW's, one is based out of Campbell River and the other is based out of the Wachiay Friendship Centre in Courtenay.

Aboriginal Housing Navigator ~ local regional MCFD funded

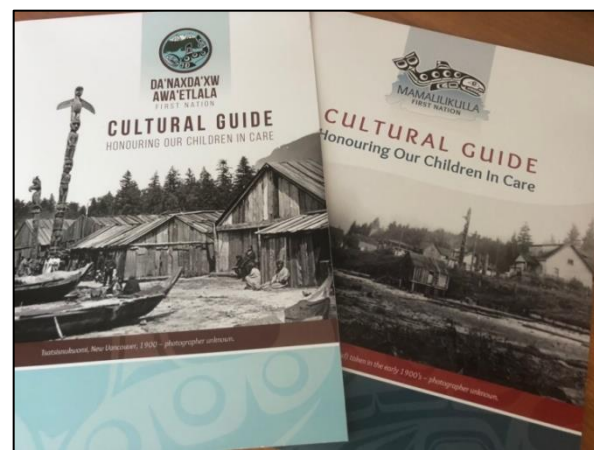
Sasamans is thankful to have received some funding to pilot a short contract position in Campbell River. With some funding from Campbell River regional MCFD office we were able to contract an Aboriginal Housing Navigator (AHN). The purpose of the Aboriginal Housing Navigator was to work with Indigenous families to inform them about their rights and responsibilities when seeking rental accommodations and assists them in understanding their rights as tenants. To assist Indigenous families find and secure safe housing, AHN responsibilities included:

- Assistance in setting up rental appointments and attend rental viewing appointments;
- Complete private housing applications;
- Complete BC housing and M'akola housing applications;
- Assist in securing furniture;
- Advocacy for safer affordable housing options for Indigenous people;
- Liaise and partner with local and provincial housing advocacy groups.

This program ran for a short time but proved to be a much needed service for our community. During this time the AHN held 24 files (individuals/couples/families), successes included finding adequate housing (public & private) while others successfully applied for and received rental assistance. The challenges identified in this program are lengthy but include lack of safety and security within the rental market; this includes (illegal suites, renovations, limited rental market, increased rental prices and prejudice landlords). The AHN found it challenging to successfully serve those in need of housing in the short time frame this contract was held. We would love to support this program again in the future on a full-time basis.

Cultural Planning and Protocol Agreements ~ MCFD Cultural Planning Funds administered by Indigenous Perspectives Society

Sasamans Society received funding to support cultural planning for two First Nations. Through this funding, Sasamans was able to develop a contracted position with Nicole Charlie, her work included the development of a Service Agreement between Da'naxda'xw Awa'etlala First Nation and the Ministry of Children and Family Development and a Service Agreement between Mamalilikulla First Nation and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The cultural planning funding also supported the creation of



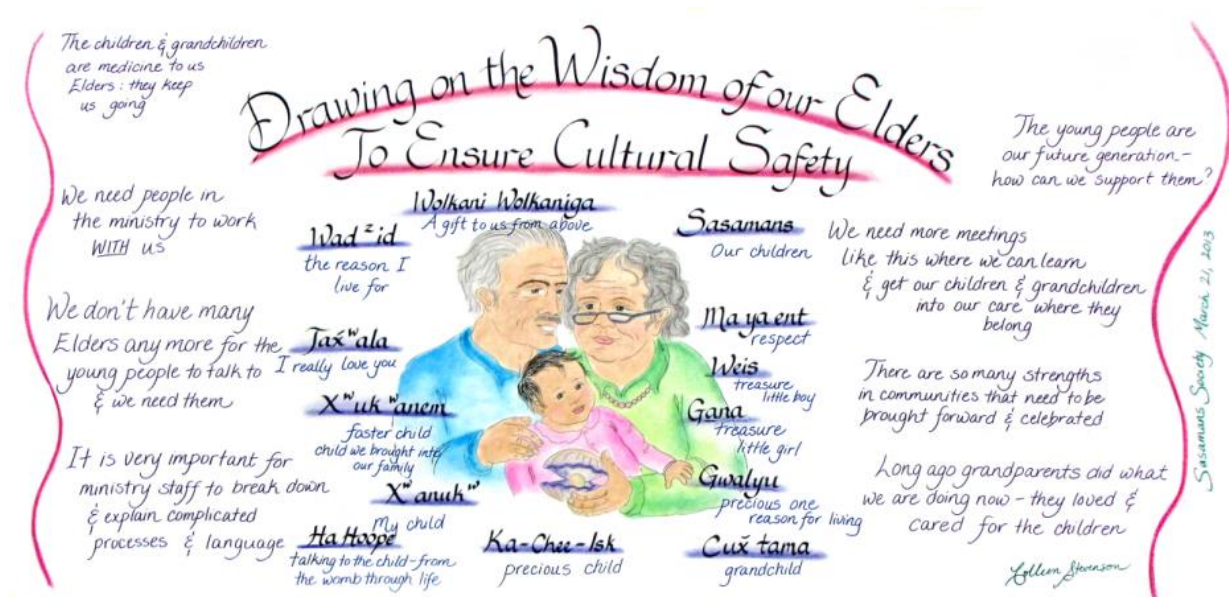
Cultural Guide books for each of these two communities, these guide books are designed to assist in planning for children in care to help “ensure that the child’s cultural identity is respected and preserved”.

Funding

Sasamans Society programs are primarily funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) through the Aboriginal Service Innovation (ASI) funding stream; our local MCFD office provides annual funding for our Cultural Connections program; this past year we received funding from MCFD Prevention and Family Support and look forward to continued support from this program; MCFD Cultural Planning Funds administered by Indigenous Perspectives Society; Urban Planning for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) through (INAC) supported our Aboriginal Youth Navigator program. Additionally, Sasamans Society receives funding from First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and New Relationship Trust (NRT) to support our Elders and youth programming.

Cultural Safety

Sasamans is committed to providing culturally safe services to Indigenous children, youth and families 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 Indigenous people.



Services Catchment regions

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

- Courtenay has a combined Youth Navigator and Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator and 1 Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker both workers operate out of the Wachiay Friendship Center.
- Port Hardy has an Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator that operates out of the G&N Health Centre and the Aboriginal Youth Navigator (position is currently vacant) operates out of the Quatsino band office.
- Campbell River has 1 Receptionist; 1 Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator; 2 Aboriginal Youth Navigators; 1 Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker; 1 Cultural Connections worker and 1 Elders Navigator that operates out of our head office.

Society Staff

Jane Watts-Ellens	Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Port Hardy
Vacant	Aboriginal Youth Navigator, Port Hardy
Hayley Banks	Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator, Campbell River
Taylor Gee	Aboriginal Youth Navigator, Campbell River
Monica White	Aboriginal Youth Navigator, Campbell River
Rachel Cain	Cultural Connections worker, Campbell River
Marisa Anthony	Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker, Campbell River
Aaron Thompson	Aboriginal Youth & Family Navigator, Courtenay
Shana Reeder	Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker, Courtenay
Nicole Kitts	Aboriginal Elders Outreach Navigator, Campbell River/Courtenay
Crystal Assu	Bookkeeper
Skye Bourget	Reception
Lori Bull	Executive Director

Board of Directors

Richard Dawson	Chair	Hazel Etagiak	Director
Nick Chowdhury	Vice-Chair	Nicole Rempel	Director
Marian Atkinson	Treasurer	Rita Pimlott	Director
Vera Peacey	Secretary	Gloria Nicolson	Director
Keith Wilson	Director	Patricia Hall	Director

What's NEW for Sasamans Society in 2018/19 & moving forward?

In June of this year Sasamans Society was honoured to witness the signing of a Service Agreement between Mamalilikulla First Nation and MCFD and Da'naxda'xw Awa'etlala First Nation and MCFD. This was a momentous occasion and it is our hope to be able to see this work continue with other bands and MCFD. Building these positive working relationships is essential for building better child welfare services for Indigenous children, families and communities.



June 1st 2018 - Da'naxdaxw Awa'etlala FN with MCFD - Service Agreement Signing in Campbell River



June 1st 2018 - Mamalilikulla FN with MCFD - Service Agreement Signing in Campbell River

Since our last AGM our team has grown considerably. With the support of and in collaboration with various bands we were able to enhance our existing programs, particularly our Youth Navigator program and add new programs with our Aboriginal Parenting Support Program offered in both Campbell River and Courtenay. We would like to continue building on the needs identified by our communities and hope to see Sasamans grow even more as we move forward.

Finally, we are excited to have our Elder's in residence program up and running at the Foundry located at the John Howard Society. The Elder's each spend a few hours a week working with the youth providing guidance and support while also facilitating cooking/baking, weaving and carving sessions with the youth.



Elders in Residence at the Foundry located at the John Howard Society. L-R: Ollie Henderson, Monica White, Gina Hunt, Taylor Gee, Edwina Henderson

What we have heard from the Community

From the Elders:

“Thank you so much [Niki], you are one special elder worker, you care and you are there to make sure we are doing great.”

“I don't know what I'd do without you [Niki], you always make sure I'm looked after and we have lots of fun together.”

“Thank you for your support [Niki], you always go the extra mile for us.”

“You're AMAZING!”

“[Niki], I just want to let you know how special you are...you are so happy and bubbly. I would not get a lot of things done without your help...we need more people with your wonderful personality and helpful caring attitude.”

From the community:



“Thank you so much for being the most amazing, immensely helpful resource! I have been consistently grateful for both Taylor and Monica’s conscientious proactive approach to working with and supporting me. Taylor’s discerning optimism and Monica’s attention to detail puts me at ease. They are kind, resourceful, intelligent, competent young women who listen intently and express themselves in thoughtful, respectful ways. As well they seem to have a great rapport with each other.”

“Thank you [Rachel] so much for your thoroughness and efficiency☺”

“Thank you so much Rachel!! I greatly appreciate your support.”

“Thank you Rachel for all the fun books and stuff you brought us!!!”

“The Gwa’sala-‘Nakwaxda’xw nation would like to thank Jane for all her support for our children in care. She is a great spokesperson for those in our nation.”

“The services provided by Jane has been phenomenal. Nothing but endless support and kind gestures from her. We really appreciate the effort she puts into her work. She is definitely all about her job.”

“Jane has provided such fantastic help and support...she was our voice and strength. We can tell she does her job with love...we were so lucky to have her with us... a big thank you from us to Jane.”

“Thank you [Marisa] for supporting me. I feel like we clicked right away.”

“I really appreciate getting support from someone [like Marisa] who cares about our community and [knows] how important our culture is to our family.”

“You have been an amazing help [Marisa]. This is so new to me and there is so much to being a parent. I don’t even know where to start”.

“Aaron became my mentor and foundation of support...he has supported me through many meetings and has always been available to me with advice, direction or just to talk. His opinion, advice and compassion are sincere and valuable to me. He has changed my life and has given me a life with my son that can not be described with words”

