



Sasamans Society

2020/21 AGM Report

Lori Bull, Executive Director

Our History

Our name was derived from community engagement discussions in 2009/10 with leaders and frontline workers. Our logo was created by the late Mulidzas *Curtis Wilson*, of the Wei Wai Kum Nation. 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 Board Chair

As I reflect on 2020 - 2021 I would like to say how proud I am of our team at Sasamans Society. It has not been an easy time navigating through COVID but our team has managed to maintain a good balance throughout. It is not easy working on the frontline with the public when being at home is a much safer place to be for everyone during these times. Our team has done a great job keeping themselves safe while maintaining their own physical health because they are following safety guidelines.

Throughout this year we have endeavoured to find ways to be together while maintaining safe distance from each other. We need to be able to stay connected and we are finding ways to do this with the restrictions that have been put in place and those who know me know that it is my preference to conduct business in person but we had to endure many meetings through video calls and conference calls throughout the year but I feel it is important to utilize safe means of in person communication when we can.

I am excited to be working with our team at Sasamans Society, our staff are committed to the work they do in community. They work together as a team and I am proud to say that Sasamans Society has a good reputation with good leadership. There will always be challenges and obstacles and this year we have had our share of challenges but when we work together and support one another we can overcome the obstacles and keep moving forward. We are happy to have the right people with us and those who step in and help us move forward smoothly during transitional times. Sasamans Society is still a young organization and we have grown over the years but it has been a slow progression and in order to maintain balance we need to take things slowly. We are always grateful for the support we receive from our community and community partners.

As we move into another year and another year of living with COVID we are adjusting and feeling like there is more flexibility to move around a little more safely with a little more knowledge and courage. As we move together through these times it is important to mention that Sasamans Society will do our best to support all of our communities in the best way we can. Additionally, we look forward to the time when we can visit communities again in person and share what Sasamans is up to and share information about our programs and services and have conversations about how we can continue to support our communities in the work we do. We all miss the days when we can move without consequence and hug without worry and share in tight circles; we are always finding better ways to keep our community informed and we look forward to the days when we can reconnect safely again.

Finally, on behalf of the Sasamans Board of Directors, I would like to leave these last words with our team, THANK YOU and our sincerest compliments to each and every one of you for your hard work and commitment, you are always doing great work!!

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

Message from the Executive Director

It is my great pleasure to welcome everyone to our Annual General Meeting, acknowledging our 2020-21 year. I would like to respectfully acknowledge that we are hosting our meeting on the unceded traditional territory of the Laichwiltach people. I am grateful to be a guest in this beautiful territory where I currently live, work and play.



It's not easy to look back on one of the most difficult years we have had to endure on a collective level in recent history. As we moved into April 2020 the world had pretty much come to a complete standstill as we were hit with the global COVID-19 pandemic. This experience was new for everyone and learning to navigate this troubling and ever-increasing global health crisis was challenging and exhausting to say the least. Many hours were spent on the phone with board members for support and guidance and also meeting online or via telephone conference with provincial ministers and health officials along with local/provincial and Indigenous health agencies, Friendship Centres, Indigenous organizations and Nations who were all eager to get some guidance around protocol and safety. To be honest it all feels like such a blur as the entire year from April 2020 to March 2021 we were all constantly having to adapt to the ever-changing protocols, rules and regulations while learning how to safely create space for our staff and clients and learning how to continue delivering services while restricting in-person contact. The lockdowns and quarantines and the constant worry of getting sick and possibly making others sick was on everyone's mind, we all heard stories of the rapid spread of this virus as it made its way into communities and households impacting many families and communities so close to home.

Sasamans Society, like many others at the time promptly closed our doors to the public and arranged for all staff to work from home. While we remained open for services, we had to limit how many people were in the office at any given time, all visitors were by appointment only. We locked our front doors; installed a plexiglass sneeze guard at the reception area; posted appropriate signs on the front door, reception area and around the office with COVID-19 health notifications and safety pre-cautions; we provided masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for use by all staff and visitors. We developed a scheduling system for all staff to rotate their time in the office to answer phones, complete in-office tasks they couldn't do from home and to maintain some sense of connection to the office. It was this way that we were able to maintain relative connection with the community, our families, youth and Elders so they knew that we were still available to give support, even in this limited way. As I write this, I am reflecting on the privilege I hold, during this time when so many people were dealing with upheaval and uncertainty in their lives, I was able to maintain my regular office schedule and I was able to continue working full-time and maintain somewhat of a routine, for that I am so grateful.

Through the summer months our program staff were finding ways to connect with their families, youth and Elders, it was during this time they were able to check in with them to find out how

everyone was doing. Everyone struggled in their own way through this pandemic, in the early months families with children in care had their visits cancelled outright, youth and Elders were isolated and disconnected from their families, friends and supports as their freedom to move around was restricted. Planning for families, children and youth were put on hold indefinitely, including family court hearings, leaving children to remain in care for an extended period of time.

I hold my hands up to all of our staff as they have all worked so hard to get through these extraordinary times, they carried the heavy weight of this pandemic and impact it has had in the work we do and families we care for. Sasamans staff are the **CHAMPIONS** in all of this as they showed up each and every day to continue their work in making a difference in the lives of those who rely on their support. They are the ones who worked each and every day to find ways to navigate the restrictions, bring the necessities to those who needed it and advocate for their clients so they don't fall through the cracks. Their perseverance carried each other and supported one another through these difficult times so that not one of them had to carry the heavy burden alone and I know this was not easy. They also carried me and held me up when I was tired and scared and trying to remain confident that everything will work out. It has been a long and exhausting year but I feel like we are coming out on the other side where the light is shining warmer and brighter and we have regained our footing and we continue to walk together gently with love, patience and compassion.

I am also grateful for the ongoing support from our Board of Directors, I am in a constant state of learning and growing and with the patience and the leadership and guidance that I receive from our board I know that I can continue this work while they have my back. I am eternally grateful!

Thank you everyone who continues to support Sasamans Society in the work we do, and for believing in us always, we can't do this work without your patronage.

Please stay safe, stay healthy and stay grounded.

'Gilakas'la,

Lori Bull, M.S.W., R.S.W.

Executive Director

2020/2021 Sasamans Society Programs and Services:

- Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator (Campbell River, Courtenay, Port Hardy)
- Aboriginal Outreach Youth Navigator (Campbell River, Courtenay, Port Hardy)
- Cultural Connections (Campbell River)
- Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker (Campbell River, Courtenay)
- Aboriginal Housing Navigator (Campbell River)
- Designated Band Representative – Mamalilikulla First Nation
- Aboriginal Elders Outreach Navigator/Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders
- Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator ***NEW***

Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator

The purpose of the *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator* (AOFN) program is to enhance service provision, provide advocacy, decrease children in care through preventative support services, and improve accountability through a family-centered approach that focuses on meeting the needs of Indigenous children and families.

The AOFN provides support and guidance to Indigenous families who are at risk of becoming involved with the *Ministry of Children and Family Development* (MCFD) or a *Delegated Aboriginal Agency* (DAA) as well as providing assistance to families whose children or grandchildren are in the care of MCFD or a DAA. The AOFN acts as a *navigator* for families to assist them in understanding the child welfare system as well as accessing various resources and support services (i.e. legal services, counselling services, parenting support services, drug and alcohol treatment services and supports etc.).

Aboriginal Outreach Youth Navigator

The purpose of the *Aboriginal Outreach Youth Navigator* (AOYN) program is to enhance service provision, provide advocacy, and to ensure that youth in care are made aware of the services available to them while in care and when they age out of care. Additionally, this program aims to decrease the numbers of Indigenous youth in care through preventative support services and improve accountability through a youth centred approach that focuses on meeting the needs of the youth. This program works with Indigenous youth aged 13 – 26 years.

The AOYN assists Indigenous youth in understanding and accessing various youth support services and resources that may be available to them as well as participating in planning processes with youth and their social workers on Youth Agreements while also providing support and guidance to youth who are:

- In government care;
- On probation;
- Transitioning out of government care or;
- Aging out of government care.

Cultural Connections Program

The purpose of the *Cultural Connections* program is to create Cultural Plans for children in care and to assist MCFD social workers in developing and implementing appropriate re-unification plans and identifying 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 works in partnership with various First Nations (provincially and nationwide), MCFD and community agencies including Laichwiltach Family Life Society. This program has at times required the CCW to travel to communities such as but not limited to Kyuquot, Ahousaht and Cortes Island.

Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker

The *Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker* (APSW) program was initiated in January of 2018. The purpose of the APSW 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 at high risk of removal. The APSW works very closely with our *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigators*. While these positions work closely together, they hold very different roles. The APSW provides intensive support through visits to the family's home while working collaboratively with the family to develop goals and reducing risks identified by MCFD. The worker walks alongside parents in their efforts to accomplish the goals set out by MCFD, they provide encouragement, parenting knowledge and resources with the objective of building strong and healthy families.

Aboriginal Outreach Housing Navigator

The *Aboriginal Outreach Housing Navigator* (AOHN) program launched in the spring of 2019 and has proven to be an essential service in our community. The purpose of the AOHN program is to assist Indigenous people in finding suitable, safe and affordable housing. Persons supported by this service may include but is not limited to Indigenous elders, families and individuals involved with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) and/or the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) including single parents leaving violent relationships; youth aging out of government care and individuals who may be couch surfing, residing in shelters/hotels or living on the street.

Designated Band Representative - Mamalilikulla First Nation (MFN)

Sasamans Society and Mamalilikulla First Nation has been working in partnership since the fall of 2019 to provide *Designated Band Representative* (DBR) services for MFN children in care; The purpose of the DBR Program is to work with MFN families living on and off reserve to ensure their children in care remain connected to family, community and culture through planning, advocacy and mediation support. The goal to achieve successful outcomes through a collaborative approach between MFN and provincial child welfare agencies is paramount, while strengthening MFN's capacity building in exercising their inherent rights to be involved in all matters involving their children in care.

Aboriginal Outreach Elders Navigator

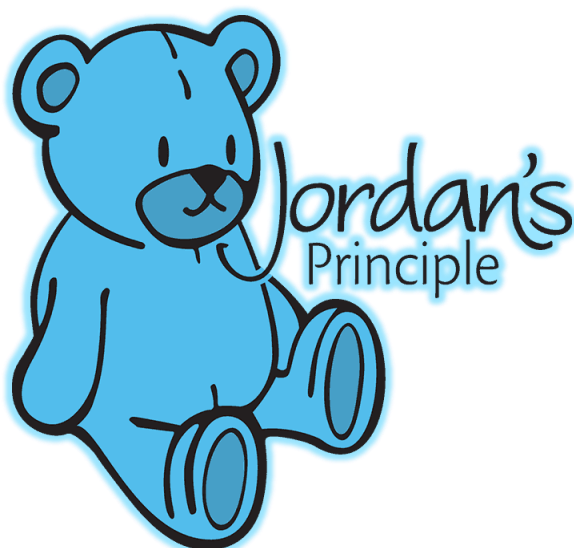
The *Aboriginal Outreach Elders Navigator* (AOEN) works with elders from both on and off reserve; the AOEN assists elders in navigating the health care system and supporting them when attending medical appointments, assisting in finding housing, tax preparation and budgeting and supporting elders in whatever capacity they require. The Elders Navigator also meets with elders in Courtenay once a week. In pre-Covid times the AOEN has spent a lot of time with the elders including attending Elders conferences that takes place in various communities each year.

The Elders Navigator program has been a valuable asset to many agencies, committees, schools and long-term care facilities in the community as they access the Elders support, love and

guidance. In previous years we had some amazing opportunities to bring Sasamans Society staff and Elders together to learn and grow from our knowledge keepers.

Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders

The *Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders* (AHCE) was established in 2013/14 to provide support and guidance to Sasamans Society staff, local First Nations organizations, youth, families at risk, and other agencies including MCFD, John Howard Society, Foundry and Campbell River Family Services. The AHCE plays an active role in the community as they assist in facilitating workshops, giving opening and closing prayers and welcoming guests to the territory when attending meetings and workshops. The AHCE has participated in various training sessions and healing workshops throughout the years organized by Sasamans Society Elders Navigator, this training has provided them with the skills and confidence to work in community.



Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator

NEW This program was launched in Campbell River in February 2021, *Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator* objective is to provide knowledgeable and culturally safe support to First Nations children/youth, parents and guardians in accessing the full range of federal and provincial health, education and social programs and services that will meet their needs. Jordan's Principle is a child-centred/child-first principle and applies equally to all First Nations children living on reserve or living off reserve and addresses the needs of First Nations children by ensuring there are no gaps in government services for them. This

program may address but is not limited to gaps in mental health, special education, dental, physical therapy, speech therapy, medical equipment and physiotherapy.

STAFF PROGRAM REPORTS

Campbell River Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator

2020-2021 Program Update

Melony Larre

This year the Campbell River *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator* learned to support clients in a flexible manner while embracing our “new normal” amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic. Many aspects of the role were modified in order to safely provide outreach services to families seeking

help in navigating the child protection process outlined by the *Ministry of Child and Family Development* and *Delegated Aboriginal Agencies*.

The effects of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic were grievous for many of the families that the Campbell River AOFN supports. Many families struggled with accessing resources amid closures and long waitlists for services, while almost all of our families grieved for connection with the children they could not visit, or hold in their arms, for months. While it was often an obstacle to find safe ways to interact, connect with and support families during this uncertain time, it was also a privilege to walk beside people (6 ft apart and with a mask on!) as we navigated the child protection process together amid all the changes and uncertainty.

I would be remiss to not mention the ground-breaking Federal Legislation, C-92 – *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, Metis children, youth and families*, officially passed on January 1, 2020. This legislation is enabling Nations to come to the table in court proceedings and have a voice in child protection matters for the children in their membership. Many Nations have appointed Designated Representatives to act as liaison for families, nations and child protection

workers, and this collaborative practice has genuinely provided a wrap-around approach to supporting families. It is always an honour for the Campbell River AOFN to participate as a team with Nations, communities and families to uphold “Our Children”.



Another element of the AOFN program that was hampered during the beginning of the pandemic, was the ability for the Sasamans Society staff to gather in person and meet in person as a team. Fortunately, the Coldest Night of the Year charity walk presented a safe opportunity to do that and the Campbell River AOFN orchestrated a team event that was safely held outdoors. The “Sas-squad” fundraised \$1335.00 to directly support families who are “homeless, hurting or hungry” in Campbell River. It was a great chance to reconnect as a team after months of not seeing much of each other, while also contributing to the community in a meaningful way.



**Courtenay/Comox Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator
2020-2021 Program Update
Kia Everson**

Due to COVID-19, life has changed substantially for the Indigenous families within this community. Not only has it devastated many Indigenous families with loneliness and grief, but has impacted the way Indigenous peoples interact with the world and with loved ones. Not being able to hug, kiss, do ceremony or feast with one another, has hurt our collective hearts. This population has had to become even more resilient within these scary times. Challenges have been client disengagement, fear of going out to make appointments, more frequent relapses and mental health challenges, an increase in difficulty finding work, housing or accessing programs within community.

Despite COVID-19's desolation, these families have adapted and pushed on resulting in; returning of children to their families, increased visitation, successful mediations, finding housing and income, accessing programs virtually or otherwise, and now with the mandatory COVID vaccines people are more comfortable meeting up to do ceremony, feast with one another, visit and laugh with one another, which is integral to the life of being an Indigenous person and celebrating our strengths. With being a part of the Aboriginal Advisory Board with MCFD, Sasamans services are an integral puzzle piece to ensuring that the Indigenous families in Courtenay and Comox feel heard and supported.

**Port Hardy Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator/Aboriginal Youth Navigator
2020-2021 Program Update
Jane Watts-Ellens**

This year there have been many changes to services offered to the public, in our community. Resources and Services offered to clients seeking counselling, parenting programs, swim/family night at the pool, Alcohol and Drug counselling, Cultural programs, Family night/community dinners, Cultural dance/song nights, and a multitude of workshops have all been put on hold, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. During this time, a few restrictions have been lifted for approximately 2 months, permitting some cultural events to be attended (with limited numbers not to exceed 30 to 50), and a short break from wearing masks in public.

There have been increased substance abuse, resulting in many overdoses and a high number of deaths. The communities in the North Island have been vastly impacted by those losses, due to both addictions and natural causes. Many families are feeling the impacts of no cultural events, celebrations, feasts and memorial services for ALL.

Our communities in the North Island (Gwa'sala Nakwada'xw, Fort Rupert, Quatsino, Kingcome, Guilford Island, River's Inlet, Zeballos, and Alert Bay) have experienced a disconnect from

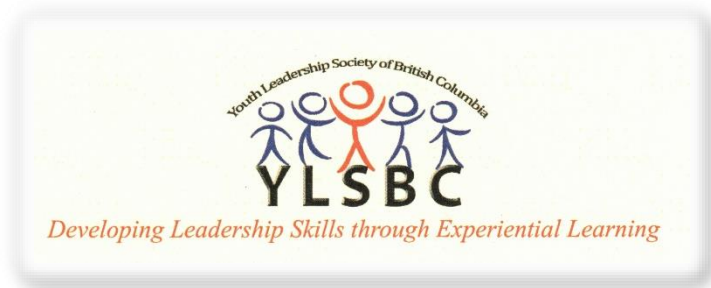
culture. The impacts are many, resulting in more domestic violence, isolation and loneliness all of which are examples of the disconnect. The families from the communities mentioned, are not able to fully grieve and say final goodbyes/farewells to their loved ones who left us during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has opened up old wounds and memories from when they attended Residential schools.

We look forward to seeing Covid-19 numbers to decrease and for public services to resume for clients to access. We have in effect gone backwards for many families who have historically struggled and were successful in years past. Those families are now really struggling as a direct result and impact of the Covid-19 restrictions to access services. Our hope as service providers, would be for FNHA and other partners to host and offer immediate services to help pick up the areas where there are great deficits, healing circles, counselling services, brushings/cleansings etc. when permitted.

Campbell River Aboriginal Youth Navigator 2020-2021 Program Update Taylor Shuttleworth & Monica Glendale

Throughout 2020 to 2021 the Campbell River Aboriginal Youth Navigator's had to navigate around the complications that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic. The AYN's worked hard to keep strong relationships with the youth and young adults in the community, which had to be done following all the required COVID-19 safety procedures.

With collaboration from Youth Leadership Society of BC (YLSBC) and Foundry the AYN program had the opportunity to provide **food security** to 10 youth and young adults throughout the entire year. The idea of the program is to create weekly meals the youth and young adults can prepare in their home to build basic cooking skills. These meals are affordable and simple and make it easy for them to recreate. This opportunity arose after a meeting with Ravi Safaya from YLSBC who introduced this AYN to various grants available for Indigenous youth and elders in the community.



This past year, the AYN program contributed to the 5th Annual **Stolen Sisters Memorial March**. This started by connecting with various members in the community, attending biweekly zoom calls which ended up turning into a \$3000 grant application to help host a COVID friendly Stolen Sisters Memorial March. Although this year looked much different, we were still able to secure funding for promotion items such as masks, posters, stickers and we were even able to purchase self care

bags to hand out to members of the community. Overall, this event brought awareness to the community and provided a safe space for those deeply affected by the outcomes of losing their loved ones. This AYN is grateful that we were able to invest in material to use time and time again to honour and uphold this event.

Social Media has become a useful tool for our AYN's to connect and interact with young people. This includes Facebook and Instagram. 'Live videos' and 'Stories' included gardening walk through, meal prep and cooking, sharing stories, sharing jokes and riddles, also resource sharing as you can post a link that will connect you directly to the resource. It is noted that young people are ever changing their social media platforms and as support workers, we do our best to keep up with the youth in their preferred methods of communication.

Challenges

Navigating counselling for high-risk young adults has proven to be extremely difficult. Barriers that begin with lengthy waitlists, not willing to take on such "High Risk" clients due to heavy caseloads, and constantly being passed along from one office to the next. With the limited number of counselors working full time, it is clear that Campbell River is in need of more counselling or therapy options, that include funding for our Indigenous youth and young adults.

Due to a parental leave in July 2020 with one Campbell River Youth Navigator, Sasamans Society only had one Youth Navigator able to provide support in Campbell River and with significant Covid-19 restrictions during this time there was no ability to safely fill the spot. As a result, the AYN received many new referrals over the year which resulted in a waitlist. It was clear that the program and youth benefit from having two support workers when possible.

Courtenay/Comox Aboriginal Youth Navigator 2020-2021 Program Update

Kia Everson

Through 2020-2021 our lives and lifestyles changed drastically due to COVID-19. Because of this, many offices and programs integral to helping the daily lives of our client base were closed to the public. Despite this, these resilient youth managed to complete some milestones such as getting housing and employment. Even finding the courage to meet up with the Aboriginal Youth Navigator, is a big step for some of these kiddos. We ensured that the youth received support from varying organizations such as John Howard Society, the Comox Valley Transition Society, the LINK Centre, the Wachiay Friendship Centre, Child and Youth Mental Health, Community Living BC, the school districts of Courtenay and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. A major success within this program is when the Indigenous youth within Courtenay/Comox begin to trust and learn that they are capable of having autonomy in their lives.

COVID-19 encouraged everyone to stay inside, isolate and keep their heads down. This coupled with being unable to see family and friends, encouraged people to escape into phones/social media/games. This has increased populations anxiety and cropped up past or new addictions. The struggles Indigenous youth had in this community have grown during lock down. This resulted in increased client relapses, not making appointments or communicating with the Aboriginal Youth Navigator. The housing and employment market has become harder to access, and programming has decreased.

Campbell River Youth in Care Network

Sasamans Society has held the role of host/local for the Campbell River *Youth in Care Network* for 3 years. The *Youth in Care Network* is a group made up of youth ages 14-24 that are in and from care, the YICN local designs activities based on the wishes of the youth who determined they would like to do things that get them out of the house, make new friends, and engage in activities they may not be able to do otherwise.



In July 2020, the coordinator went on parental leave, but the other AYN offered to take over the coordinating role in a lower capacity setting. Covid did offer more opportunities through virtual groups which was highly taken advantage of. A Take-Out style Dinner service has been created with the partnership of Foundry. This dinner grows in numbers every event held. Zoom has held a great space for youth to connect “face to face” while still being safely distanced. We have the ability to create craft kits to send out to young people so they do not have to leave their safe space.

This year we engaged with **378 young people** alongside **53 adult supports**.

Groups included:

- Over 130 Take-out style Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter community dinners
- Celebrating BC Child and Youth in Care Week - Week long online celebrations
- Over 14 Zoom meetings including over 40 craft kits sent out
- 2 Socially distanced in person groups
- Wrote letters for a handful of youth
- Social Media engagement posts
- 50 Christmas Stockings
- Held a free tax clinic

**Cultural Connections Program
2020-2021 Program Update
Rachel Cain**

The Cultural Connections Worker (CCW) ensures that Indigenous children and youth in care have the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to their family, community and traditional culture. The CCW assists MCFD social workers to identify potential extended family placements as well as to provide relevant resources to support children, youth and their caregivers uphold their cultural identities. One key piece of the role is the development of Cultural Safety Agreements for children and youth to ensure their cultural needs are met while they are in foster care or placed with a caregiver outside of their Indigenous community. The CCW collaborates with other community professionals, extended family and communities to further these goals and to create a circle of support around these children and youth to support these connections.

Between 2020 and 2021, the CCW had to find ways to adjust the program to address incoming health restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to provide these important services to our children and youth. Meetings normally held in community were moved to virtual platforms, like Zoom or Skype, or were held on the phone. While this had led to many barriers in the work we do, there is the benefit of being able to hold meetings with remote communities more often and safely. For example, winter weather conditions can be a concern when planning a meeting with a remote First Nation where travel is necessary. Another benefit we have identified over this year has been the gaps in service for off-reserve members who are unable to participate in community events, activities or workshops. Many organizations and Indigenous communities have had to come up with creative ways to share cultural teachings without having participants in person. As a result, accessibility when it comes to cultural resources and teachings has flourished leading to more options for urban or off-reserve Indigenous families to engage with their traditional cultures.

**Aboriginal Outreach Housing Navigator (AOHN)
2020/21 Program Update
Alyne Neault**

The AOHN program works to challenge housing barriers for all and to improve accountability through a community-centered approach focusing on meeting the housing needs of the Indigenous community.

Our program has had some great successes housing individuals and families, with an increasing need for affordable family housing. Our relationships with the *Coalition to End Homelessness* and the *Urban Indigenous Housing & Wellness Committee* (UIHWC) has grown our presence in community, giving folks another alternative for assistance in their housing search. It is very exciting that UIHWC is exploring options, working with local nations and provincial agencies to increase affordable housing options in Campbell River.

2020-21 was a busy year for the AHN, during the year the AOHN collaborated with many agencies and programs and was actively involved in the *Coalition to End Homelessness* and the *Urban Indigenous Housing & Wellness Committee (UIHWC)*. In early April 2020 a devastating fire completely destroyed the *Pacific West Apartment* building located at 645 9th Ave, the largest low-income apartment complex in Campbell River. This building fire resulted in the unexpected homelessness of 90 residents (75% of whom were Indigenous) and necessitated the AOHN to work tirelessly alongside other community supports and housing and homelessness networks to advocate for the increase of low-income housing units in Campbell River. In the aftermath of the fire we worked with Emergency Support Services, City of Campbell River, and BC Housing to house displaced tenants at the *Coast Discovery Inn* for approximately 3 months while we worked on finding housing. With a lot of agency involvement and the City of Campbell River, BC Housing purchased a motel, offering a long-term rental solution. Prior to the purchase of the motel, we successfully housed just under half of the tenants privately. We finalized the move into the *Riverside Village* at 29 rooms. Every press release and communication that went out noted Sasamans Society as one of the leaders in the fight for the tenants. Our organization's exposure generated a lot of new clients, partly due to word of mouth of the tenants as well as referrals from previous clients.

The next event was the purchase of the *Rose Bowl* by BC Housing which was converted to a short-term 20-bed supportive shelter. The Rose Bowl opened in late September/early October with 2 meals provided daily, laundry facilities and outside support agencies welcomed into the space. Although opposition was expected, it was disappointing to see the level of opposition from the Campbell River Downtown Business Association (DBA). The AOHN attended the Committee of the Whole meeting (Mayor & council) to hear the DBA's concerns with our unsheltered population, of which more than 50% identify as Indigenous. It was an eye-opening experience to hear first hand how this group is so angry about the unsheltered folks but offered nothing to help the situation other than 'moving them out of downtown'.

In July 2020 the AOHN reported that BC Housing had secured land at 580 Dogwood to build a 24/7 staffed supportive housing. The intention is for the residents of Rose Bowl to automatically move into the new 50 unit (studio apt) fully supported housing facility when the building is complete. After several months of construction *Q'Waxsem Place* opened in the spring of 2021 and is a fully furnished, 50 unit (studio) supportive housing with a full kitchen preparing two meals a day for residents.

With the successes comes the challenges of our community housing situation:

- Covid-19 exacerbated the rental situation because landlords, property managers and existing tenants were unable to go forward with viewings for prospective tenants in order to respect social distancing guidelines.
- There are a lot of new properties in the city, none of which are affordable by normal standards. We are still sitting at a 0.4% vacancy rate (2nd lowest in the province) and

surprisingly, rents have not come down. Rents are still unreasonable and unmanageable to the majority of our client base.

- Rental history or lack of, has made it difficult for clients to get into both private and managed buildings. Family size is still (and probably always) a struggle.
- All of the new rental properties in Campbell are ‘market rent’ which is not affordable for most of our clients who are on assistance or disability.
- The shelter rates have not changed in almost a decade, currently at \$375 for a single person, \$550 for a family which doesn’t even cover a room share rental!
- Due to the lack of housing stock, when someone gets evicted, their chances of finding a new place to rent becomes more difficult.

In May 2021 our *Aboriginal Housing Navigator* Alynne Neault moved on from Sasamans Society, it was sad to say goodbye to Alynne as she worked so hard in the brief time she was with us and she is dearly missed. As you can see in this report her hard work, her compassion and dedication to the unhoused community contributed to the many housing successes throughout the 2020-21 year. We wish her much success in her future endeavors.

It is so rewarding to be a part of these successes and seeing our community address what has been a long-standing problem. This will not eradicate the need for affordable housing in Campbell River but it goes a long way towards addressing our unsheltered and precariously housed folks. I am blessed to be a small part of it. ~ Alynne Neault, AOHN - July 2020

Designated Band Representative for the Mamalilikulla First Nation 2020-2021 Program Update

Tasleem Mall

The role of Designated Band Representative (DBR)/Band Designate for the Mamalilikulla First Nation continues to be a successful program at Sasamans Society. The connection to the team at Sasamans and their respective programs, are integral to the success of the Mamalilikulla’s ability to support their Nation members to navigate the processes involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Many client files can overlap, helping to create wrap-around services for the Mamalilikulla Nation members who are involved through the Designated Band Representative’s involvement with the child protection system.

This year, the Band Designate has made contact with all children’s social workers across the Province of British Columbia, including the lower mainland, Prince George, Kitimat, and the Vancouver Island Region. We have also established a relationship with child protection in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. The Mamalilikulla First Nation hopes to engage into an Agreement with the Ontario child protection Ministry, similar to the Section 92.1 Agreement we have with BC. We have also walked alongside several First Nations Band Representatives, here on Vancouver Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, lending to much learning about other Nation’s experiences in this work, but also the sharing of culture and the sharing of the importance of our work in providing cultural learning opportunities for our children in care.

It has been a challenging but rewarding year. The Designated Band Representative program could expand to allow for increased attention to children in the permanent custody of MCFD. Providing Cultural mentorship and “*Walking Beside Our Children*”, is a program in the initial stages of development. Sasamans Society is eager to support Mamalilikulla First Nation to increase their capacity to development programs and looks forward to 2022.

**Jordan’s Principle Service Coordinator
2020-2021 Program Update
Jerry Mundi**

The Jordan’s Principle service coordination position came into effect in early February of 2021. The initial 6 weeks comprising of this fiscal year report consisted mostly of setting up a regional program. As of March 31st 2021, Indigenous Services Canada took the program in house and implemented regional coordination. Thus, the set up of the program entailed development of internal resources such as intake and consent documents, reporting templates, along with application and support forms. This period of time also consisted of the service coordinator spending dedicated time to build local relations by connecting with local organizations, institutions, and First Nations to update the community on the changes to the program such as eligibility increases and greater service inclusion.



The coordinator worked directly with Indigenous Services Canada in obtaining training on application processes and attended to building a community of practice with the assistance of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society. As the program was in its infancy at the end of this fiscal year, only 7 files were opened to service coordination in March of 2021.

Successes

- Sasamans Society launched the Jordan’s Principle Service Program successfully. Both the Coordinator and Executive Director were able to attend a week-long intensive training with Indigenous Services Canada and many other organizations supporting the well-being of Indigenous children.
- Sasamans Society has connected with all the nations we support and given them information regarding access to the Jordan’s Principle program and the program coordinator
- The Service Coordinator has had the opportunity to connect with many institutions and organizations to set up seminars to update them on changes to the program, eligibility, and legislation – Ministry of Children and Family Development teams, Parents Legal Centre, Foster Parents Society, Child and Youth Support Needs, Child and Youth Mental Health,

Children's Health Foundation, Vancouver Island Kids First, Bear Essentials Program, and others.

- Sasamans Society is one of a select few BC organizations to work with the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society to create the new framework for regional implementation of the Jordan's Principle Program
- Sasamans Society is a key partner in the creation of the 'Hub', an online website and resource guide with multiple access point for families, organizations, and coordinators.
- Sasamans Society has been able to establish a collaborative team of Vancouver Island Coordinators and hosts monthly meetings to assure we are addressing gaps that are specific to the needs of coastal nations and our urban Indigenous population
- Sasamans Society has begun to explore building formal agreements with partner nations and Indigenous Services Canada to increase eligibility for children living off reserve and not registered status

Challenges

- The turn around time on adjudication from the new BC Jordan's Principle Focal Point office has been considerably long with all listed files as noted above awaiting response to date. This is much longer than the agreement under the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal
- Delays in obtaining consent and other necessary information from the Ministry of Children and Family Development when they are the temporary guardian of a child has been a large challenge to obtaining services and supports for children in a timely manner
- Much time and many resources have been used at the onset of the program to build the necessary forms, documentation, and processes to launch the program locally as there was no formal documents shared by Indigenous Services Canada at the launch of the program. This has also created lag when there have been different interpretations of what is needed at different levels of government
- Indigenous Services Canada has slowed our ability to connect with our local agencies and partner nations as they would like the information to be shared to be done in conjunction with their staff and with all shared materials to continue to flow through a lengthy approval process
- There are also delays in accessing funding quickly when other governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Family Development push funding requests back and forth, recreating the barriers that our program was built to handle

Sasamans Society is now prepared to move forward into a full fiscal year where our agency will be able to provide streamlined services for families in need of accessing the Jordan's Principle Program. Consistent meetings and trainings have been arranged with our partner Nations, organizations, and with Indigenous Services Canada so that we may continue to strive to build a program that becomes more accessible and funds many more children and youth than in the past

Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders



Allen (Olie) Henderson with Mark Tazumi (John Howard Society). Olie presented this hand crafted cutting board to Foundry as a gift and will be used to prepare many holiday dinners to come. Thank you Olie for this thoughtful gift for our partners at Foundry 😊



One of our talented Elders engages with youth through cedar work. This supportive recovery program is run through John Howard Society

The Elders program has continued to develop in order to work with the current COVID-19 protocols and still support our community of Elders. The Elders did an amazing job adapting to the enhanced use of technology, social distancing and mask mandate while providing language classes along with attending Zoom committee meetings to ensure that they continue to be actively involved in the community. Although we were unable to provide the Elders with their usual level of support, we continued to seek out new ways to provide them with adequate resources in order to help them get through this difficult year.

A main highlight from this year was being able to assist the Elders by supplying them with gift cards and gifts in an effort to make the isolation and financial stress of the pandemic just a little easier. We are very happy that although our community cultural support looked different this year we were still able to have the Elders supporting multiple agency's in the community!



Elder participating in family groups via zoom during COVID-19 restrictions!! 😊
Campbell River Family Services

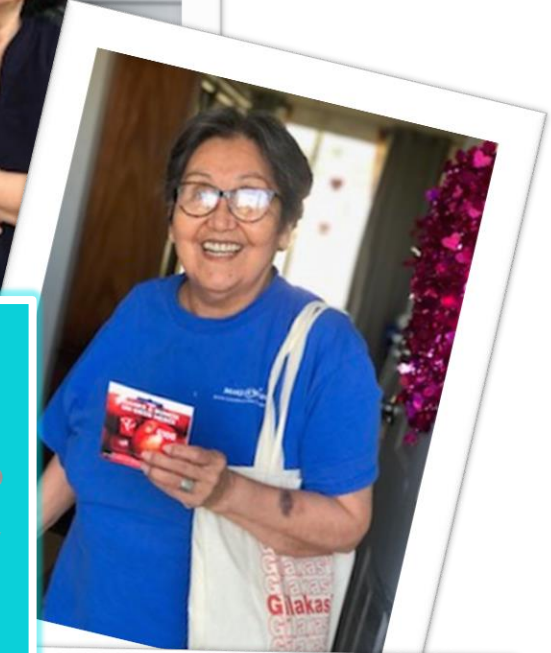
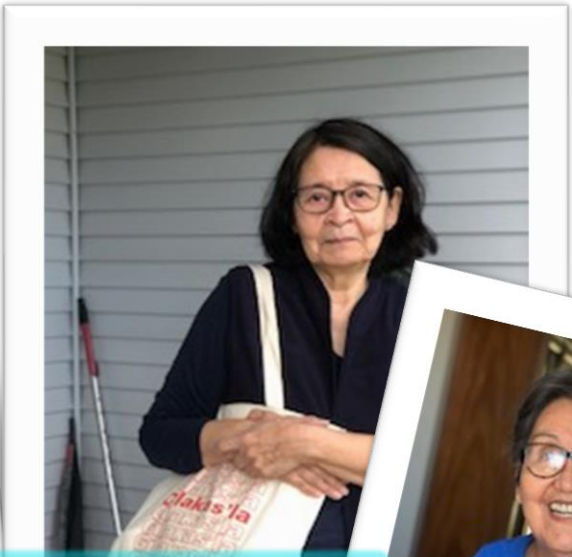
Socially distanced visit with an Elder having a rough day with a beautiful view



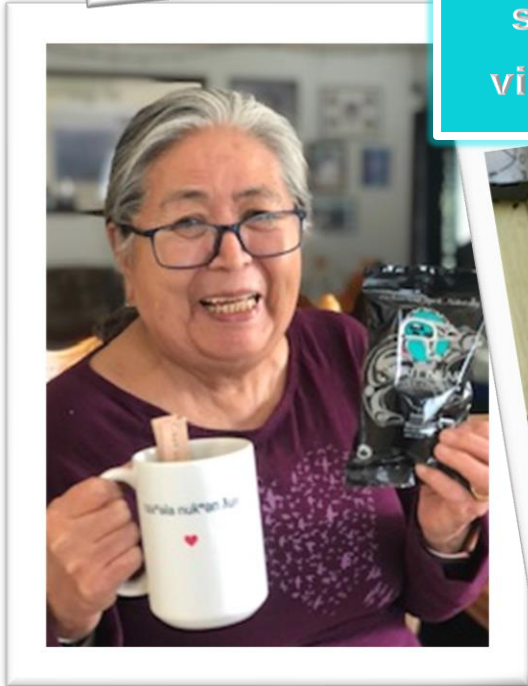
We took time to closely monitor the isolation and loneliness of our Elders and do as much as we could to assist ones struggling in this regard

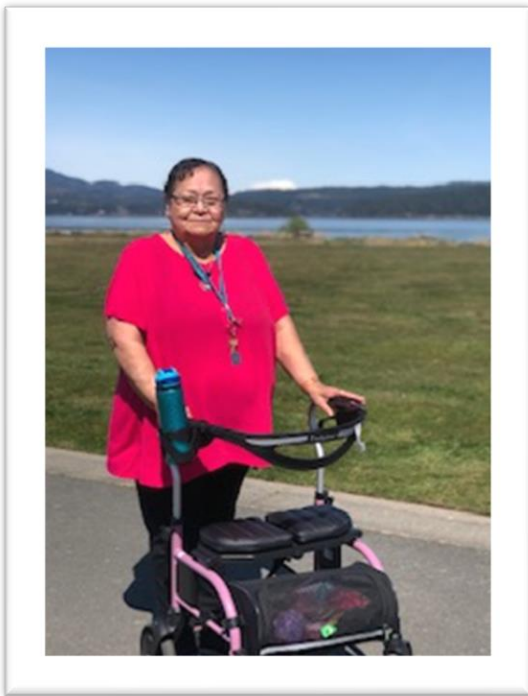
Wellness and self-care inspired gifts delivered to our Elders group. Including grocery gift card to make these tough times a little easier!





Delivering the gifts was the BEST part!! 😊 The Elders were so happy to receive their gifts and to have a socially distanced visit with our AOEN!





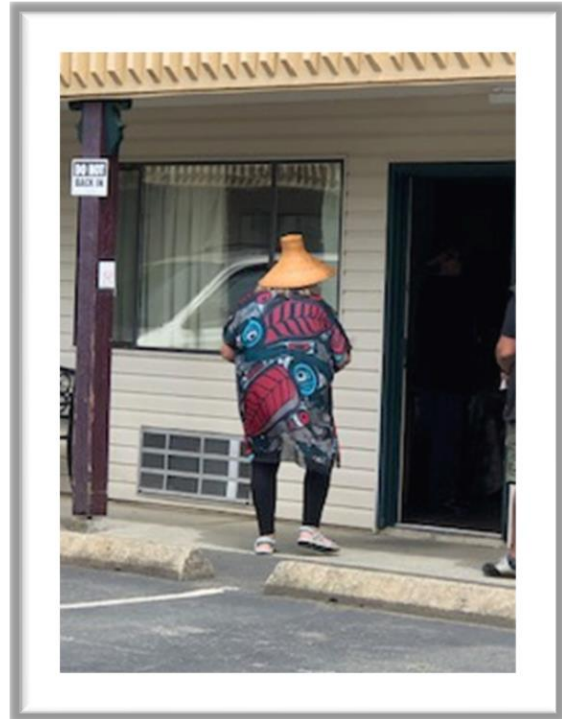
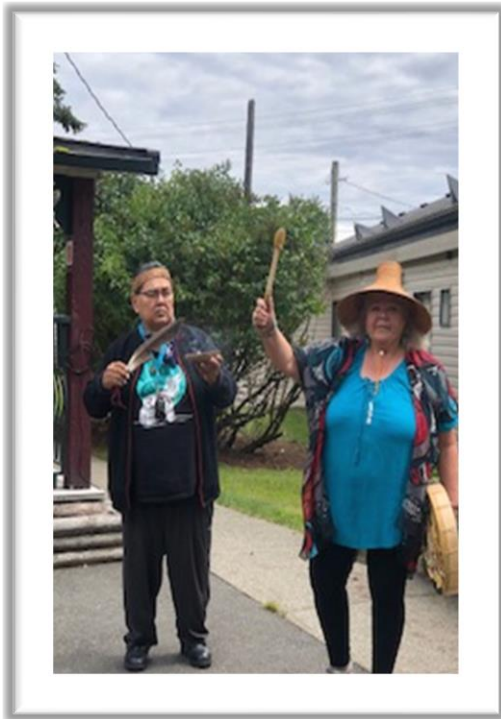
Left:

Elder out for a walk as per doctors orders. With social distance protocol in place we made time to work on physical health and wellness to promote the importance of a healthy heart



Below:

Our Elders blessing the *Riverside Village* before residents move in. This set a tone for the new beginning these beautiful families were embarking on as most were displaced from the fire of the 9th Ave building. It was a beautiful ceremony.



Partnerships

Our work at Sasamans is enhanced through our many partnerships; we have nurtured many collaborative working relationships in each of the communities we work in (Campbell River, Courtenay and Port Hardy). These partnerships include but are not limited to our community agency partners and Nations:

- Laichwiltach Family Life Society;
- John Howard Society;
- Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre;
- Gwa'sala-'Naxwada'xw Health Centre;
- KDC Health;
- Wachiy Friendship Centre;
- Ministry of Children and Family Development and;
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Network;
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Legal Services Society
- Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala
- Mamalilikulla
- We Wai Kai
- Wei Wai Kum
- K'omoks
- Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Tribe
- Quatsino
- Tlatlasikwala
- Dzawada'enuxw
- Gwa'sala-Naxwada'xw Nations

Funding

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) provides funding through 3 funding programs:

- Aboriginal Service Innovation (ASI) - MCFD Provincial Office
- Prevention and Family Support - MCFD Provincial Office
- Roots Program (Cultural Connections) - MCFD Campbell River Regional Office
- *First Nations Health Authority* (FNHA) for our Elders program;
- Mamalilikulla First Nation for the Designated Band Representative position;
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Jordan's Principle
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Network – Campbell River Youth in Care Network

Sasamans Society Programming and Partnerships 2021/2022

Legal Services Society/Parent Legal Centre/Legal Aid BC

In March of 2021 Sasamans Society signed an MOU with *Legal Services Society* regarding Indigenous Justice Services Initiatives. This fantastic partnership allowed for Sasamans Society to set up a Virtual Meeting Room in Port Hardy using a grant of \$5,500 from Legal Services Society. With this one-time grant we were able to purchase and install computer equipment with accessories necessary to provide virtual legal support for clients requiring assistance from the **Parent Legal Centre**. The intent of this initiative is to help address the gap in child protection services for the communities we serve. Once we secured the funding and the equipment, we set up the Virtual Meeting Room in Port Hardy at the Aboriginal Outreach Family and Youth Navigator office and went live in May 2021.



Cultural Safety Inside Myself, My Home & Society

Suggestions for MCFD

- Creating a welcoming ministry office - Aboriginal art - Aboriginal person behind the desk
- Ministry to suggest that families bring a support person(s) perhaps a staff person from the band who knows the system
- Have an Elder present at meetings to create that Sacred Space through prayer
- Meeting outside the ministry office perhaps in people's homes
- Having social workers more aware of the power they possess & the language they use (eg 'family' might not mean nuclear family)
- The use of ceremony - honoring families - celebrating when children return - healing past hurts - lifting people up

Lellen Stevenson



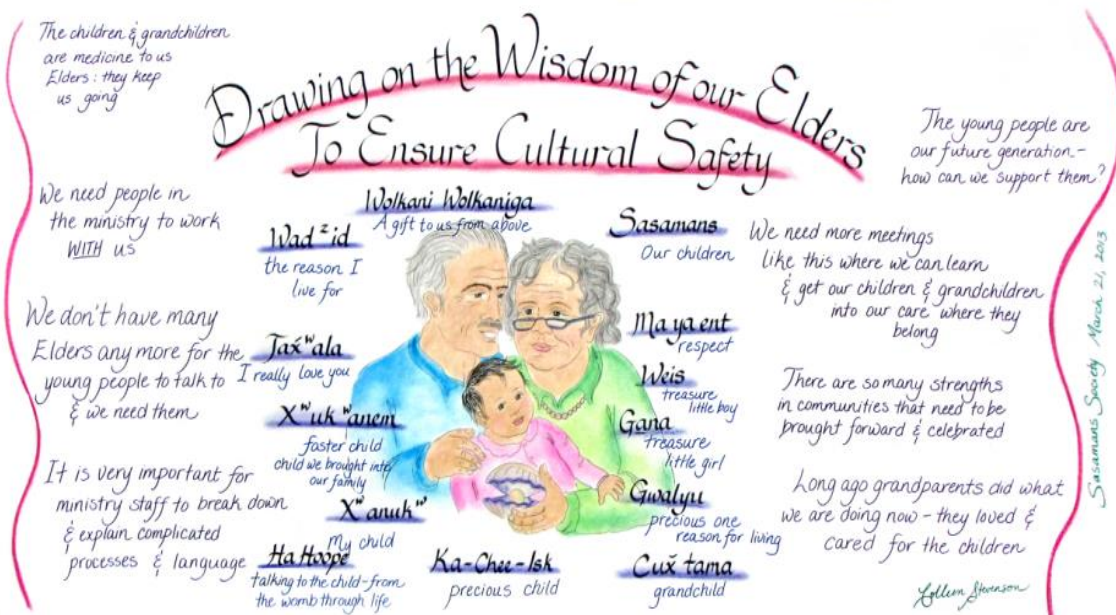
Suggestions for MCFD

- Social workers attend cultural events celebrations or gatherings
- Create system where families who take related children in are compensated equal to Non-Native foster families
- Social workers go to an Elder to learn about a family
- Smile & be courteous
- Respect silence, don't interrupt
- Allow a navigator or liaison to guide families through the processes & explain
- Continued teaching of traditional ways to children, families & ministry staff
- Ensure that children in Non-Native foster homes maintain contact with extended families & entire community
- Safe alternatives for kids leaving the foster system
- Take time with people
- Be present

Sasamans Society
March 21, 2013

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.



Program Services Catchment Regions

Sasamans Society services Courtenay, Port Hardy and Campbell River for both on and off reserve youth, families and Elders:

- **Courtenay** has a combined *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator/Aboriginal Youth Navigator* and an *Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker* both workers currently operate at their new office space on the second floor at 2435 Mansfield Drive.
- **Port Hardy** has a combined *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator/Aboriginal Youth Navigator* that operates out of Rendezvous Place at 9250 Trustee Road.
- **Campbell River** has one *Receptionist*; an *Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator*; two *Aboriginal Youth Navigators*; an *Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker*; a *Cultural Connections Worker*; an *Aboriginal Outreach Elders Navigator*; the *Aboriginal Housing Navigator*; the *Designated Band Representative* for Mamalilikulla First Nation; the *Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator*; the *Bookkeeper and Executive Director* that operate out of our head office at 680 Head Start Crescent.

2021/22 Sasamans Society Team

Jane Watts-Ellens	Aboriginal Family & Youth Navigator	Port Hardy
Melony Larre	Aboriginal Outreach Family Navigator	Campbell River
Taylor Shuttleworth	Aboriginal Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Monica Glendale	Aboriginal Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Rachel Cain	Cultural Connections worker	Campbell River
Marisa Anthony	Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker	Campbell River
Kia Everson	Aboriginal Family & Youth Navigator	Courtenay
Shana Reeder	Aboriginal Parenting Support Worker	Courtenay
Nicole Kitts	Aboriginal Elders Outreach Navigator	Campbell River /Courtenay
Tasleem Mall	Aboriginal Caregiver Support Worker	Campbell River
Jerry Mundi	Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator	Campbell River
Vacant	Aboriginal Housing Navigator	Campbell River
Fiona Hansed	Bookkeeper	Campbell River
Skye Bourget	Reception	Campbell River
Lori Bull	Executive Director	Campbell River

2021/22 Sasamans Society Board of Directors

Richard Dawson	Chair	Elizabeth Carter	Director
Nick Chowdhury	Vice-Chair	Katherine Frank	Director
Shelly Haunch	Treasurer	Rita Pimlott	Director
Vera Peacey	Secretary	Willie Moon	Director
Cindy Inrig	Director	Patricia Hall	Director



*Thank you for attending
Sasamans Society AGM for
2020/21*