



# Sasamans Society

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## *2023/24 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 Indigenous 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 the Executive Director

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

Executive Director

*I would like to respectfully acknowledge that the offices of Sasamans Society are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples and the northern Coast Salish peoples, these are the Kwakiutl First Nation, We Wai Kai Nation, Wei Wai Kum First Nation, Homalco First Nation and K'omoks First Nation. I am grateful to live, work and play in the beautiful lands of my ancestors.*

Sasamans Society introduced two new programs during the 2023-24 year, the **Jordan's Principle ARC Fund Administrator** coordinates third-party payments to alleviate administrative burdens and delays in processing approved Jordan's Principle requests on behalf of Indigenous families. The ARC Administrator ensures accurate funding processes, supports the Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator, and liaises with Indigenous Services Canada to implement the Enhanced Service Coordination model and ARC Fund Initiative in BC Region. The **Indigenous Youth Justice Support Worker (IYJSW)** supports Indigenous youth (13-27 years old) involved in the criminal justice system who also face homelessness or housing risks. The role addresses both legal challenges and housing instability, while promoting cultural safety to ensure equitable support and recognizing the impact of systemic factors and historical trauma. This approach fosters trust and positive outcomes for Indigenous youth in the justice system.

We are continually mindful of community needs and we look for ways to meet those needs, unfortunately, we are often challenged with lack of space in our building to successfully grow our programming, while I am happy to report our team has grown over the years, we do find it is an ongoing issue of looking for creative ways to house our staff. Our Youth and Elders staff have created a beautiful space next door to our main office building which is being used to house our Youth and Elders programming, it has been a great year of beautiful connections being made in that space.

My role is to support our program and admin staff in their jobs while handling administrative and financial responsibilities, human resource issues and more. I appreciate the support of our administrative staff and program staff who step up and step in when

necessary. I am truly grateful to have the support of my Executive Assistant, who is also our bookkeeper, and **DOER OF ALL THINGS** Fiona Hansed. In the last year, Fiona transitioned our financial accounting system from Adagio to Quickbooks and moved our payments system from cheques to direct deposit. This new system allows our staff, board and contractors etc. to receive payroll/payments directly into their bank accounts rather than having to deposit cheques manually. This transition was long overdue, as our payments system needed this overhaul to be more efficient all around. Fiona has supported me, and our Sasamans programming in more ways than I can count including applying for various funding opportunities and keeping me organized. Fiona has also become the go to person for staff when they need program supplies, have personnel questions or just looking for general support and guidance on a day-to-day basis, particularly when I am unavailable.

On November 2, 2023, I attended a gathering in Ottawa with Mamalilikulla First Nation Designated Band Representative, Tasleem Mall. This gathering was hosted by the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) along with the Assembly of First Nations and First Nations Child & Family Caring Society (The Caring Society) with Cindy Blackstock. This gathering was a follow-up to a questionnaire for First Nations not served by a First Nations Child & Family Services Agency. This questionnaire was completed and submitted by Tasleem on behalf of Mamalilikulla First Nation, as a result she was invited to attend this gathering to discuss next steps with other Nation's representatives. The purpose of this engagement was to generate a path forward to "define different starting points, identify successes, challenges, and needs"; through the initial engagement approach (questionnaire, regional gatherings and case studies) it was determined that "there are multiple paths forward for First Nations on pursuing well-being for children, families and community". This event was a day long gathering that brought representatives from all over the country to discuss community needs, including staffing, programming, organizational structures and funding approaches. **Dr. Cindy Blackstock** presented the



keynote address, and I am thrilled to say that Tasleem and I had the opportunity to sit with Dr. Blackstock briefly as she graciously allowed us to interrupt her during lunch. I honestly do not know how I kept my head on straight being in the presence of such a powerhouse.

Sasamans supports staff to attend various training/learning events/workshops/webinars throughout the year, whether they are online or in-person when possible. This year a handful of our staff participated in 1<sup>st</sup> season of the *4 Seasons of Indigenous Learning* Course offered through the **Outdoor Learning School & Store**, this learning platform allowed for participants to engage in online learning modules as well as virtual presentations by various Indigenous knowledge keepers, writers, artists and scholars.

This year Sasamans participated in the **Shoe Box Project** for Women in Transition we sponsored 6 shoe boxes at \$50 per box, we donated \$300 for the **Stockings for Seniors** through London Drugs and donated \$200 each to **Courtenay Food Bank** and **Campbell River Food Bank**.

Sasamans also participated in hosting two volunteers from **Katimavik**, an organization that empowers young adults to engage in community services through “collaborative projects and cultural exchanges”. This was an interesting experience that brought 2 cohorts of youth from across the country to Campbell River, each for 10 weeks. The volunteers that were placed with Sasamans Society were Marisa and Bree. Both who spent time supporting program staff and participating in our youth and Elders activities.

In January we were approached by a city representative to invite Sasamans Society to consider responding to an RFP through BC Bid for the operation of a minimal barrier tiny home village for folks living without shelter in Campbell River. We embarked on the journey of possibility but after some in depth discussion and an onsite visit on February 14<sup>th</sup> to The Village (operated by the Lookout Society) in Duncan with Fiona and Jacquie it was decided this project was not in scope for Sasamans Society. We are truly happy to see that the Lookout Society will be operating Homewood temporary housing and supports in Campbell River.

**Thank you to everyone for your continued support of Sasamans Society, our staff, and our programs! We do this work because we believe in what we do but we can't do it without YOU! Gilakas'la!**

## 2023/2024 SASAMANS SOCIETY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator (Campbell River, Courtenay, Port Hardy)
- Indigenous Youth Navigator (Campbell River, Courtenay, Port Hardy)
- Cultural Connections (Campbell River)
- Indigenous Parenting Support Worker (Campbell River, Courtenay)
- Designated Band Representative – Mamalilikulla First Nation
- Care and Connections Liaison Worker – Mamalilikulla First Nation
- Indigenous Elders Outreach Navigator/Aboriginal Harmony Circle of Elders
- Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator
- ARC Fund Administrator
- Indigenous Youth Justice Support Worker

## 2023/2024 PROGRAM REPORTS

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### Campbell River Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator (IOFN)

#### 2023/24 Program Update

Jazmine McCrimmon-Cook

The Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator (IOFN) supports families who are at risk of, or involved with, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). IOFN collaborates with families to address concerns, advocate for their strengths and against injustices, and helps them find and connect with resources that meet their needs.

One success story involves a parent who successfully reunited with all three of her children. When IOFN first met her in 2022, she was homeless, and the ministry was pursuing continued care (CCO) for the children. Now, all three children are back with her. It was a challenging but rewarding journey to walk alongside her and witness her overcome various obstacles to be reunited with her children. Other successes throughout the year include helping parents access treatment or safety beds, connecting them with mental health support, groups, or parenting classes, and assisting them in finding housing.

IOFN developed a goal sheet called "Namwayut" (which means "family" in Kwak'wala). This tool is used in meetings to visually document goals for parents, IOFN, social workers, and any other participating parties. The purpose of this sheet is to visually assist with

accountability among all participants and to guide conversations about concerns, needs, and plans/goals.

In learning about community needs, IOFN discovered that professionals were experiencing a disconnect following COVID-19. In response, IOFN created the Indigenous Service Circle at Laichwiltach, where a group of Indigenous service providers will meet once a month to discuss the needs of Indigenous individuals, families, or communities, and how to improve support through wraparound care, community action, groups, and other initiatives. This group will begin meeting in the next quarter.

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## **Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator/Indigenous Youth Navigator – Port Hardy 2023/2024 Program Update**

**Jane Watts-Ellens**

This past year has seen significant progress for the Indigenous Family Navigator (IFN) and Indigenous Youth Navigator (IYN), with a focus on supporting Indigenous families and youth as they navigate complex judicial and child welfare systems. Through strong collaboration with community partners, legal professionals, and Indigenous organizations, the IFN/IYN has worked tirelessly to ensure that clients receive culturally appropriate support and advocacy. The following report highlights key activities, partnerships, court involvements, and training opportunities that have contributed to this year's successes.

The IFN/IYN has developed strong partnerships with the local Tri-bands, including Quatsino First Nation and Kwagulth Nation from Fort Rupert, as well as with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). By working closely with these groups, the IFN/IYN has been able to provide much-needed advocacy and guidance to families and youth, ensuring they receive the culturally sensitive services they require. Significant progress has been made in connecting with various stakeholders, including defense lawyers, director's counsel, presiding judges, law enforcement, victim services, Gladue writers, and the Native Court Worker. These connections have been crucial in improving the navigation of judicial and MCFD-related legal matters for Indigenous clients.

The IFN/IYN attended numerous court sessions to support youth and families and has been actively involved in three trials this year. In collaboration with a Gladue writer, the IFN/IYN worked to ensure that two of these trials, scheduled to convene later this year, are moving toward positive outcomes. It is anticipated that these cases will be resolved through Indigenous alternative measures, providing culturally appropriate justice

solutions for Indigenous clients. The focus on these measures reflects a growing commitment to restorative justice and healing within the community. To stay at the forefront of advocacy for Indigenous families, the IFN/IYN attended several training and professional development sessions throughout the year, including virtual training sessions that focused on judicial advocacy. These learning opportunities have enhanced the IFN/IYN's capacity to support Indigenous families effectively, particularly in navigating the legal intricacies of MCFD cases.

The past year has been one of growth, collaboration, and meaningful progress for the IFN/IYN. Through strong partnerships with community stakeholders, active involvement in court matters, and ongoing professional development, the IFN/IYN has made significant strides in advocating for Indigenous families and youth navigating the judicial and child welfare systems. An invitation to the Law Foundation of BC's Shared Learning Day underscores the importance of the IFN/IYN's work and its impact on advancing racial justice. As the year continues, the IFN/IYN looks forward to building on these successes and deepening its commitment to supporting Indigenous families in need of advocacy and guidance.

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## **Indigenous Youth Navigator – Campbell River 2023/2024 Program Update Monica Glendale & Debbie Cathey**

The Indigenous Youth Navigator program, operating in Campbell River, Courtenay, and Port Hardy, is dedicated to enhancing service provision, advocacy, and awareness of available services for Indigenous youth involved with the Ministry. The program's key objectives include:

- Reducing the number of youth in care.
- Reducing youth justice involvement.
- Providing culturally appropriate services.
- Increasing Elder involvement in youth planning.
- Collaborating with local agencies, urban organizations, and First Nation Bands.

The program achieved several milestones, including establishing the **Youth to Elder Connections Group**, which fostered meaningful relationships between youth and elders. The group also facilitated the registration of youth for status cards, promoting cultural connection and identity.

Despite facing challenges such as overdose deaths, including the loss of a youth client, the program achieved notable successes, including the Mamalilikulla Blanketing Ceremony, honoring the cultural heritage of the Mamalilikulla Nation and the continuance of the Youth to Elder Connections Group, providing a strong foundation for ongoing support and cultural connection.

Unfortunately, one of the major issues the program, and our community encountered this past year was the BC Transit strike. However, we still managed to achieve:

- The return of a full-time Youth Navigator.
- Reconnection with the community and sustained engagement in the Youth/Elder group.
- Continued support of the CR Youth in Care Network.
- Establishing a regular office space at Foundry, which provided a consistent support hub for youth.
- Successfully connecting with hard-to-reach youth.
- Supporting a sibling group to age out together.
- Hosting a successful Family Day dinner.
- Increasing collaboration with the MCFD youth team.

Over the past year, Debbie acknowledges significant strides in her new role as *Indigenous Youth Navigator*, she collaborated with Sasamans staff Niki and Amanda, and Elder Kathryn to organize activities for the Elder/Youth group and actively engaged with local resources by participating in various training sessions. Debbie lists her key achievements to include:

- **Community Engagement:** Facilitated successful events such as Whale Watching, drum making, and a summer feast. Launched and joined girls' groups at local schools and built connections with teachers and support workers.
- **Professional Development:** Completed ASIST training, Trauma Informed training, and FASD training, and attended the "Love Back Training," gaining valuable insights for client support.
- **Support and Referrals:** Managed many new referrals and enrolled a client in the BladeRunner program. Strengthened community ties through meetings with local organizations and planning future collaborations.

Throughout the year, the Indigenous Youth Navigator program demonstrated resilience, creativity, and a commitment to fostering the well-being and cultural connection of

Indigenous youth. The successes, despite significant challenges, highlight the ongoing need for continued support and advocacy for Indigenous youth in care. Our efforts have contributed to enhancing youth programs, strengthening community connections, and fostering personal and professional growth.

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## **Indigenous Youth Justices Support Worker**

### **2023/2024 Program Update**

**Amanda Turner**

During the year we have seen significant growth in relationships between youth and Elders. With new funding, we can continue to support cultural experiences that foster this sense of community. Many of the youth are eager to participate when they know certain Elders will be present, showing the strength of these connections. One memorable moment was a youth discovering her Indigenous heritage, sparking a rich discussion about cultural identity with an Elder.

In my role as an *Indigenous Youth Justice Support Worker*, I have received several referrals from RCMP Restorative Justice to support youth in completing their hours. These relationships often continue beyond the mandated hours, where I help youth navigate legal needs, access wraparound supports, and plan for their future. One youth shared how COVID-19 impacted her life, while another, after visiting the Nanaimo Military Camp, reflected on their desire to provide a better future for their children.

Many of the younger clients, especially those under 18, face legal challenges without fully understanding their charges or rights, leading to anxiety and uncertainty. To address this, I facilitate *Circles of Care*, collaborating with Restorative Justice, schools, community services, and legal professionals. These circles provide clarity and allow youth to move forward with their education and reintegrate into the community.

In September 2023, I attended the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC forum in Vancouver, where I learned from Indigenous leaders and activists, forming valuable connections that have benefited the youth I work with. I also networked with filmmakers focused on youth education about human trafficking, with plans to bring their film to Campbell River in the future. Round table discussions at the forum provided fresh perspectives on Indigenous justice.

The *Youth to Elders Connection* continues to offer a safe, culturally centered space for youth to engage with Elders. In December 2023, we hosted a Christmas event for youth experiencing grief, providing a space for healing and relaxation. The youth consistently express appreciation for these gatherings, often inviting friends and showing respect for the Elders. This environment contrasts with the stress they face in legal and housing services.

On October 13, 2023, Sasamans Society, in partnership with SD72, hosted the Gathering for Youth Workers, bringing together over 70 professionals. The event opened with a prayer and song to honor youth who had passed. Positive feedback has led to plans for another gathering in 2024, and the networking opportunities have strengthened community connections.

Attending the “Love Back” training with Myrna McCallum was transformative, offering insights into trauma, workplace oppression, self-regulation, and authentic self-care. The training deepened my understanding and equipped me with skills that have positively impacted both my professional and personal life. It was also a great opportunity to bond with the Sasamans team, who continue to offer support in my work.

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## **Cultural Connections Program 2023/2024 Program Update**

**Rachel Cain**

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the Cultural Connections Worker was able to focus on providing in-community connection for children and youth connected to our program. Cultivating strong relationships with our community partners was key in order to make many of these opportunities happen. Advocating to our funders and maintaining frequent contact with our indigenous communities ensure that children and youth connected to our Cultural Connections Program can engage with any cultural or community opportunities available to them. For example, in May 2024, the CCW, MCFD staff and caregivers were able to support our clients attend school potlatches in both Ahousaht and Gold River.



Our clients greatly benefitted from being on their traditional territories, witnessing their own cultural protocols but also reconnecting with extended family and community members. When a child or youth is placed in care, it not only has a significant impact on their families but on the communities themselves who feel this loss deeply. A large part of our program is devoted to relationship building not only with our families but with our community partners to devise new and creative ways to engage with our clients and provide them with positive experiences within their culture and communities. The hope is to continue to build on this momentum and create many more opportunities in the next fiscal year.

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**Indigenous Parenting/Caregiver Support Worker (IP/CSW)  
2023/2024 Program Update  
Lavina Boyd – Campbell River**

The Indigenous Parenting/Caregiver Support Worker (IP/CSW) Program has been incredibly busy, achieving many successes over the past year. One of the most significant accomplishments is the return of nine children to their families, a huge victory for Indigenous families in Campbell River. The program has also seen numerous referrals for writing Jordan's Principle support letters, highlighting the many needs within our local communities. Additionally, many families are accessing and successfully completing the Circle of Security Parenting Program, an attachment-based program that strengthens the bond between parents, caregivers, and their children.

Many parents and caregivers are referred to the program by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). Through their work with the IP/CSW, parents and caregivers focus on child-centered needs, and in some cases, files are closed due to the success of the parents and caregivers. It's always a positive outcome when a file is closed because the family no longer requires services!

One of the major challenges parents and caregivers face is navigating Canada's colonized systems, including healthcare, child welfare, judicial, and educational systems. Many Indigenous parents and caregivers continue to struggle with the child welfare system, which is operated by MCFD. It has often been said that MCFD and its foster care system represent a modern version of residential schools, continuing to create significant barriers for Indigenous families.

Despite these challenges, I am deeply honored to walk alongside our local Indigenous families, helping them navigate these difficult and stressful times, especially when MCFD is involved. I greatly admire the strength and resilience of our families and constantly encourage them to never give up and to keep fighting for our children. Every Child Matters!

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**Indigenous Parenting Support/Family Navigator - Courtenay  
2023/2024 Program Update  
Cecilia Plecas**

At the beginning of the year, I participated in the early stages of the Situation Table, an international initiative designed to offer assistance through a team of specialized service providers. Throughout the year, I contributed to the development of this process, navigating its growing pains.

In July 2023, I had the opportunity to attend and support the Mamalillikulla gathering, where I assisted elders and helped participants fully enjoy this special event. Additionally, I completed child protection training in July, which proved valuable given the upcoming program changes. This training enabled me to transition into the Indigenous Family Outreach Navigator (IOFN) role. When Kia Everson went on parental leave at the end of July, I took over her responsibilities, allowing me to challenge myself in a new role that I had just begun.

In this capacity, I learned about various meetings held at MCFD, including Family Case Planning Conferences (FCPC) and Family Plan Reviews (FPR). I also started attending MCFD hearings in court on Wednesday mornings. This experience enhanced my understanding of the different types of orders and how clients could work collaboratively with me, their lawyers, and social work teams.

By the end of August, I was working five days a week (up from four days a week), attending court and Situation Table meetings, managing an adjusted client load, and participating in various community support meetings. I also took part in the International Day of Awareness, supporting clients struggling with substance use issues.

In September, I completed my Designated Band Representative (DBR) training through Indigenous Perspective Training based in Langford, BC. This online training deepened my understanding of the intersection between social work governance and Indigenous clients' rights, as well as the Child and Family Community Services Act (CFCSA). Additionally, I attended Radicalization to Violence Training in September, offered free of charge by the Community Justice Center in Courtenay. This in-person training provided insights into the theory behind the staircase to radicalization, equipping me with examples and tools to handle emotionally charged situations in my professional roles.

In November, I attended a community engagement session on ending homelessness in the Comox Valley. This event provided valuable networking opportunities, allowed me to promote my professional roles, and enabled me to advocate for clients at risk of homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing in the area. In December, I participated in a resource fair at the LINC, promoting support services to youth and their families.

The start of 2024 has been positively challenging. In February, I attended the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) in Campbell River. This course provided me with tools for navigating difficult conversations about suicide and reassured me that suicide can be prevented. I also attended the Brazelton SUD Summit online, and in March, I participated in a presentation on FASD by advocate Myles Himmelreich. This presentation was informative and beneficial to my various professional roles.

Over the course of the year, there have been many positive developments. Numerous clients benefited from both the IOFN and IPSW programs, with several successfully transitioning back into their family homes and completing Circle of Security parenting programs. I look forward to the challenges and successes of the coming year.

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**Designated Band Representative for the Mamalilikulla First Nation  
2023/24 Program Update  
Tasleem Mall**

Over the last year the Mamalilikulla First Nation (MFN) Designated Band Representative (DBR) has worked toward supporting increased cultural connection for Mamalilikulla Band members involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

The Mamalilikulla First Nation (MFN) is dedicated to reconnecting with and creating opportunities for our children who have been in the care of and in the Continuing Custody of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to reconnect with their Indigenous ancestry, culture, heritage, traditions, values, and language. A major success of work initiated in the Spring of 2023 was the receipt of financial support from the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) under their Harm Reduction Grant. DBR wrote a proposal to utilize the fifty-thousand dollars provided to the Mamalilikulla First Nation for cultural and family connection specifically for children who are in the Continuing Care of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), but also included parents and their children in foster care, who are actively engaging in their healing and successfully addressing MCFD child protection concerns and are working towards their children returning to their care.

The proposal included the use of this initial funding to pilot a project to reconnect our children, to support their growth of healthy Indigenous sense of identity and to support early childhood development through an Indigenous, community-specific, and intergenerational lens. We put forward consideration of this opportunity as a steppingstone toward increased land-based learning to increase exposure to the traditional territories of their People and that of their Kwakwaka'wakw ancestry.

It is vital that we continue to create opportunities for Mamalilikulla children who have been in the care of MCFD on a permanent basis most of their lives and may not have cultural mentorship to foster their Indigenous identity and sense of belonging. Being welcomed to their community and to participate in their own culture, as we know, serves as a protective factor against the harm associated with substance abuse and disconnection from their families. Sadly, many of our children and youth who were removed from their parents care have had exposure to substance use and the negative impacts of addiction. Being mindful of our children's experiences of disconnection to their parents, relatives, and Nation for much of their lives, we decided to invite the children and their foster families to a gathering tailored to welcome them home and to make a

connection between their lived experiences and their inherent Indigenous identity and foster their sense of belonging to the Mamalilikulla People.

By hosting a feast and family gathering to reconnect families, youth, Elders, and those that support them to the ways of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture, we hoped to connect the



children to opportunities for healing through an Indigenous, community-specific, and intergenerational lens. This gathering was hosted over two days, in the unceded traditional territory of the Ligwitda'xw people; the We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, Kwiakah First Nations on who's traditional unceded territories we are honored to work, live, and play. Cultural supports were embedded into the

programming, with support of Mamalilikulla singers, dancers, and drummers, who shared generously with our guests, the cultural and traditional songs and dances that have kept the Mamalilikulla People united over the decades. Each child was then blanketed by Elders and relatives, as symbolic of their belonging to the People of Village Island, the People of 'Mimkwamlis.

Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society provided Cedar teachings, Cedar brushing and debriefing support to all guests. We were honored to have had a Kwakwak'awakw carver provided teachings about traditional carving methods; a Kwakwak'awakw artist supported a workshop on Devil's Club necklace making; a Mamalilikulla



Nation member shared teachings on jam making and several Mamalilikulla Elders shared their presence in welcoming the children and families to learn about historical, cultural, ancestral lineage and language. We created a fun and playful “scavenger-hunt”, that encouraged the children to move about the hall, asking the Elders for help to answer questions, about Village Island, about Kwak’wala and culture, to get prizes. This was a great success in getting the children to interact with their Elders and many of the Elders shared that this was a great way to interact with the children and youth. The atmosphere was tremendously uplifting for the spirit of all the guests, and we received much positive feedback during and after the event. We truly hope that we can do this annually and also work toward increasing family connections and the wider Mamalilikulla community.

Mamalilikulla Chief and Council sincerely thanks all the guests and knowledge holders that shared with the children their teachings; and to the Sasamans Society and all Sasamans Staff who had provided support during the event.

Following the “Reconnection- Gathering with Our Children” event, several Mamalilikulla children and three Mamalilikulla Elders participated in a land-based healing and cultural learning opportunity at Hada. This was a five-day camp, which included language, traditional healing practices, connection with healthy Indigenous community members and adults, at Nawalakw cultural camp. The Nawalakw coordinators supported a trip to Village Island which truly inspired the children to gain experience of where their ancestors lived and where they are from.



The sound of the drum woke us up in the mornings and ended our days in the evenings. Language was imbedded into our days and every teaching, in a fun and interactive way, allowing us all to enjoy the learning and wanting more. The staff at Hada were welcoming, encouraging, kind; and the programming was mindful, supportive, and truly well organized. As participants, we honored each other and the hosts by learning and being in the community and communal living space that Nawalakw was designed to be, and as the days passed, the children became increasingly comfortable with contributing to the daily living. We were kept busy from morning until evening.

A major component of our day-to-day participation as part of the community was honoring and serving the Elders that were present. Learning to understand how important the Elders are to our lives and the wisdom and knowledge they hold and so generously share with everyone was a blessing.

The experience was nothing short of phenomenal and all the children and adult chaperones expressed how this camp more than lives up to their mission of connection to culture as a way of healing from the trauma and exposure to all forms of disconnection experienced by Indigenous People, including experiences of drug and alcohol abuse in their childhood, and as a preventative measure against future substance use by showing them alternative ways of being.

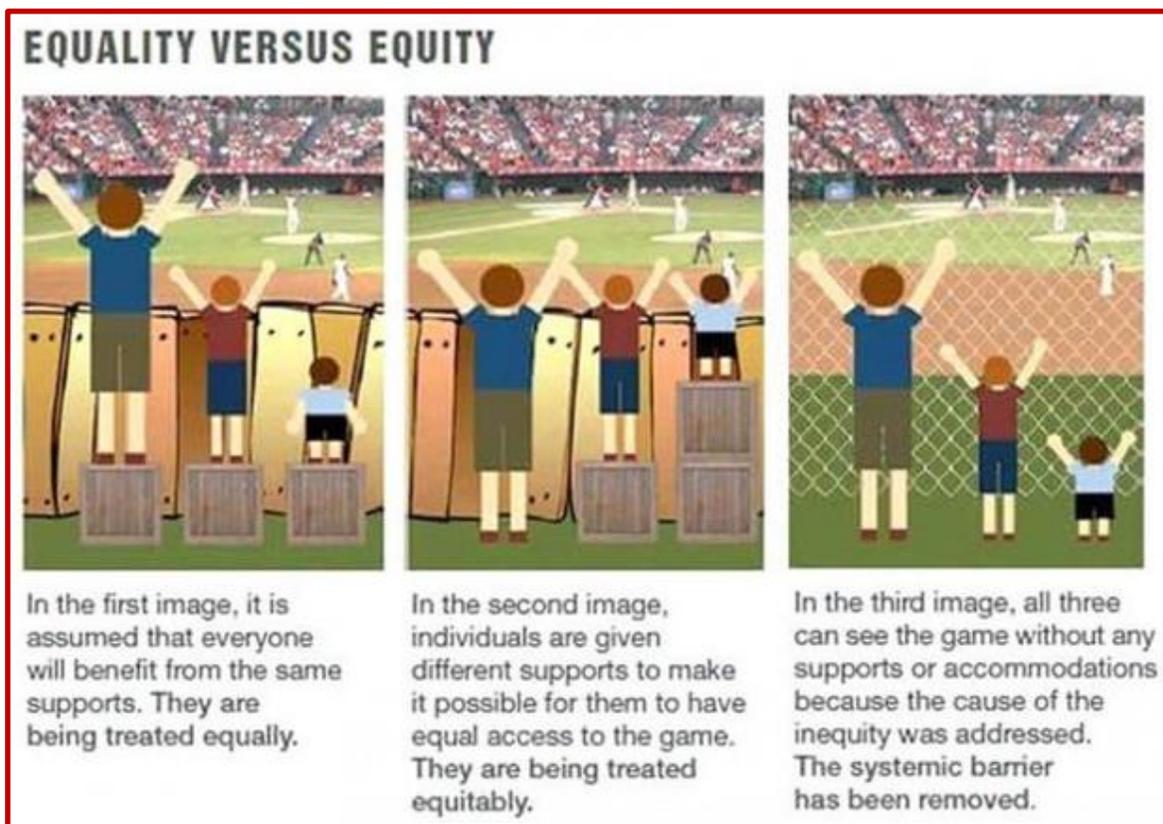


The Nawalakw camp immerses the youth in language and culture for 5 days. The youth will have connected with each other at the family gathering and will reconnect and gather at the culture camp, thus furthering those familial ties.

Jordan's Principle Service Team  
2023/24 Program Update  
Marisa Anthony and Jacquie Henderson



Jordan's Principle ensures that First Nations children can access the products, services and supports that they need, when they need them. Jordan's Principle is based on the concept of *substantive equality*, also known as equity, as the following image illustrates:



At Sasamans Society our Jordan's Principle team includes Marisa Anthony, the Community Service Coordinator and Jacquie Henderson, the Approved Request Contingency (ARC) Fund Administrator

**Service Coordinator:** Marisa has been in her role since October 2022 and is responsible for the *front-end* part of the Jordan's Principle process which includes:

- Meeting with the parents/guardians and service providers to identify and understand the unique and unmet needs of their child(ren)

- Gathering all the information required for the successful submission of the Jordan’s Principle application, such as compelling letters of recommendation from professionals in the child(ren)’s circle of care, quotes from service providers, etc.
- Help connect families to alternate/additional avenues for resources and funding in the community.

**Arc Fund Administrator:** Jacquie started with Sasamans in November, 2023 and is responsible for the *back-end* part of the Jordan’s Principle process which includes:

- Waiting for Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to approve an application – the approval is what triggers the involvement of the ARC Fund Coordinator.
- Making arrangements to distribute the funds to the families and/or paying the service providers directly.

In the past, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) had been operating Jordan’s Principle solely on a reimbursement model, which could take months (or years) to pay families and service providers. Thankfully, ISC created the ARC Fund to help expedite payments. The premise of ARC is that ISC makes funds available to ARC organizations, such as Sasamans, and then those organizations manage the payment process in a timely manner for approved Jordan’s Principle applications. Sasamans received our original ARC fund transfer from ISC on September 1, 2023, with \$350,000 available to disburse. The table below shows the summary of ARC Fund transactions since the start of the program at Sasamans until the end of the fiscal year:

Note that additional ARC funds were provided to Sasamans by ISC on April 1, 2024, in the amount of \$406,200 and will be forthcoming on July 1, 2024, in the amount of \$900,000

In compliance with ISC’s expectations and Sasamans internal requirements, we have been able to

ARC Fund Transactions - September 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024			
Month	Quantity of ISC Numbers Approved <sup>[1]</sup>	Quantity of Item Numbers Approved <sup>[2]</sup>	Total Dollar Amount Approved
September 2023	4	5	\$52,680
October 2023	9	22	\$39,684
November 2023	15	33	\$94,099
December 2023	14	24	\$57,780
January 2024	24	46	\$170,955
February 2024	20	41	\$119,533
March 2024	15	44	\$119,551
<b>Totals</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>\$654,282</b>
<sup>[1]</sup> ISC assigns a file number to each approved Jordan's Principle application			
<sup>[2]</sup> One file may have one or many approved items within it			
An item could include any number of products, services or supports such as: dental surgery, cultural mentorship, groceries, an autism assessment, learning tools for school and home use, physiotherapy, beds and bedding, hotels, mileage, behavioural therapy, cleaning services, clothing, medication, respite, etc.			

successfully develop and implement the processes and documents required to administer the ARC fund and track payments related to Jordan's Principle approvals.

We've had the opportunity to establish relationships with a number of key service providers, many of whom were at risk of dropping their Jordan's Principle clients due to the lengthy delays in payment from ISC. Using the ARC fund, we are now processing payments well within their payment terms. We've also advocated on behalf of service providers to get their outstanding invoices (two+ years in arrears) paid either by expediting payments from ISC or by getting the payment method transferred to ARC. Perhaps most importantly, the families are getting reimbursed quickly for costs that they have incurred, and they are receiving gift cards in a timely fashion to make purchases for the necessities of life.

Jordan's Principle has provided emergency funding for a number of clients in need of urgent home deep cleaning and bed-bug fumigation, which required the families to temporarily move out of their homes, while the work was getting done. This funding also covered the cost of replacing basic furniture, appliances and household items when these things were unable to be salvaged. This allowed families to mitigate immediate MCFD concerns regarding the health and safety of their homes, while also ensuring that their children had access to the basics such as adequate/comfortable living conditions, food and clothing. School District 72's Indigenous Education Department has recognized the requirement to support the basic needs of Indigenous children. As a result, the school district has started to provide short term funding for essentials such as clothing and groceries to augment supports offered by Jordan's Principle.

Marisa and Jacquie attended the *Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator Gathering* in Montreal, QC on



March 5-7, 2024, hosted by the *Assembly of First Nations*. The gathering was an opportunity to learn from a variety of guest speakers including Jordan River Anderson's family, Cindy Blackstock and the Caring Society, lawyers involved in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's (CHRT's) non-compliance motions and many other subject matter experts. It was a great opportunity to network with other professionals working in the Jordan's Principle field from across the country. Marisa and Jacquie found this to be a

highly valuable experience that inspired ideas that will positively impact Jordan's Principle service delivery in the Campbell River area moving forward.

On March 12, 2024, the Campbell River Mirror published a front-page story on the cultural immersion program at Carihi High School which was funded by Jordan's Principle. The article featured interviews with facilitators and school staff who explained how the program has positively empowered students to connect with the land, culture and ancestors.



Marisa attended the Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator gathering in Kelowna on April 4-6, 2023. This was the first in-person gathering of Service Coordinators from across the province. A variety of workshops were offered and participants were provided with opportunities to build relationships with Service Coordinators from across

BC, Jordan's Principle Hub staff, and several members of Indigenous Services Canada's policy team.

The Federal worker's strike which took place in April 2023 greatly impacted the timeline for Jordan's Principle application decisions and payments. At the time, BC region Jordan's Principle was already experiencing delays. The strike created further backlog that ISC's Jordan's Principle team has not yet recovered from. The turn-around time for ISC to review Jordan's Principle applications and provide their Notices of Decision continues to grow at an alarming rate.

	Decision Turnaround Time as Stated on ISC Website	Decision Turnaround Time in Reality
Urgent Requests	Within 12 Hours	Up to 3 Months
All Other Requests	Within 48 Hours	6+ Months to Over a Year

With such significant delays, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Indigenous children to receive the products, services and supports that they need, when they need them. The Caring Society has filed a motion with the CHRT against the federal government for non-compliance on this, and several other issues.

**Indigenous Elders Navigator/Harmony Circle of Elders  
2023/24 Program Update  
Niki Kitts**

The Art Hive Program, led by our Art Therapy Intern Mandy, concentrated on Elder-led initiatives tailored to their specific needs. We are incredibly proud to be on this journey with our Elders. It has been more rewarding and healing than we ever imagined. The mutual support between Elders and facilitators has been inspiring, and we've witnessed tremendous growth.



*So much laughter in the Art Hive making clam rattles... Laughter is good medicine... 😊*



Niki and Mandy have made the Art Hive their own by putting all the love and good energy they had for their late grandmother who they used to craft with as little girls into this beautiful group. They have enjoyed creating with the Elders as they focus on their Indigenous roots and bring Indigenous west coast art therapy to the Elders. This has created tremendous growth within the group.



One notable event was a fashion show and feast, filled with laughter, marking the final Art Hive day before the summer break.



*As the Elders are on a very strict budget, we had acquired good quality clothing and shoes for them to choose from. We decided to do a fashion show and make it a fun day with good food and much laughter. This was the last Art Hive day for before we took some time off in the summer. SO MUCH FUN!*

The Cultural Connections program fostered collaboration between Elders and youth, exemplified by a young man learning moccasin-making from a respected Elder, a master moccasin maker with Cree heritage.



A joint event between the Mamalilikulla Band and IOEN featured a welcome home ceremony for children in care, where elders imparted language and cultural knowledge in a beautiful ceremony.



Part of the welcome home was to also have those children have an amazing cultural experience at Hada. We supported this effort with some loving beautiful Elders to go along and teach the children language and culture.

CARIHI Secondary had a Community services Fair. The Elders and Youth Navigators set up a table with Elder and artist, Kathryn to promote our Youth and Elders Connection that has become so popular and a true gem to the community. It has created so much buzz that a school in the district has requested we do the same thing there.



## Throughout the Year...

The Elders program organized several facilitated wellness workshops, which resulted in significant healing.

A youth worker gathering in Campbell River successfully increased requests for Elder support.

SPARC conducted homelessness research at the Wellness Art Hive, providing a platform for youth and Elders to share their voices.

Elders facing health challenges received loving support from the Indigenous Elders Navigator.

The program concluded for the year with a "New Beginnings" workshop.

## 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
- LKT Health (formerly KDC Health)
- Wachiay Friendship Centre
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Network
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Legal Services Society
- Legal Aid - Parent Legal Centre (PLC)
- 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

With the support of our funders Sasamans Society has been able to deliver our programs and services in our three urban centres of **Port Hardy**, **Campbell River** and **Courtenay** as well as surrounding communities within our catchment areas. Sasamans Society has always served families, children, youth and Elders who identify as Indigenous which includes First Nations (status or non-status), Metis and Inuit. The following partnerships and funders make it possible for us to continue serving our communities:

- 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) - Elders Navigator Program
- Mamalilikulla First Nation - Designated Band Representative & Cultural Connections Liaison Worker
- Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator & ARC Fund Administrator
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Network – Campbell River Youth in Care Network
- BC Community Gaming Grant – Youth Justice Support Worker, Campbell River (2023-2024 Program)
- First Peoples Cultural Council
- New Relationship Trust

## DONATIONS

- Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis First Nation \$15,000.00
- Coastal Community Credit Union \$7,500.00
- WestUrban Developments Ltd. \$1,000.00

## 2023/2024 Sasamans Society Team

Jane Watts-Ellens	Indigenous Family & Youth Navigator	Port Hardy
Monica Glendale	Indigenous Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Debbie Cathey	Indigenous Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Rachel Cain	Cultural Connections Worker	Campbell River
Marisa Anthony	Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator	Campbell River
Jacque Henderson	Jordan's Principle ARC Administrator	Campbell River
Lavina Boyd	Indigenous Parenting & Caregiver Support	Campbell River
Cecilia Plecas	Indigenous Parenting Support & Family Navigator	Courtenay
Nicole Kitts	Indigenous Elders Navigator	Campbell River
Tasleem Mall	Mamalilikulla FN Designated Band Rep	
Kayla Graydon	Mamalilikulla FN Cultural Connections Liaison	
Fiona Hansed	Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper	Campbell River
Mary Henderson	Reception	Campbell River
Lori Bull	Executive Director	Campbell River

## Staff who moved on since last AGM

Amanda Turner	Indigenous Youth Justice Support	Campbell River
Jazmine McCrimmon-Cook	Indigenous Family Navigator	Campbell River
Kia Everson	Indigenous Family & Youth Navigator	Courtenay
Kaitlyn Williams	Indigenous Youth Navigator	Courtenay

## Current Sasamans Society Board of Directors

Richard Dawson	Chair	Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre
Bert Boucher	Vice-Chair	Mamalilikulla First Nation
Shelly Haunch	Treasurer	Wei Wai Kum First Nation
Vera Peacey	Secretary	Laichwiltach Family Life Society
Cindy Inrig	Director	We Wai Kai First Nation
Ruby Mannila	Director	Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala First Nation
Elizabeth Carter	Director	Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Tribe
Susan Savoie	Director	K'omoks First Nation
Rita Pimlott	Director	Wachiay Friendship Centre
Willie Moon	Director	Dzawada'enuxw First Nation
Patricia Hall	Director	Quatsino First Nation