Sasamans Society

2025/26 Annual Report



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 V*ision* 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.

From the Executive Director

Lori Bull

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.

Challenges and Organizational Growth

Staff turnover and workplace challenges have been an ongoing consideration this year, with leadership recognizing the impact across the entire team and on the consistency and continuity of programming for children, youth, families, and Elders. Staff transitions can disrupt the development of trusting relationships, both within the organization and with the community. Consistent, trusting relationships are foundational to effective, culturally grounded service delivery. For many Sasamans service users, particularly those who have experienced uncertainty and instability, the loss of familiar faces can create barriers to engagement and a sense of safety.

Operationally, turnover has required additional time and resources for recruitment, onboarding, and training, which can temporarily affect program capacity and service delivery. It has also placed additional pressure on existing staff, who have stepped in to maintain programming while supporting new team members through transitions.

These challenges are not being overlooked. Sasamans Society remains committed to addressing concerns appropriately, strengthening accountability and communication, and fostering a respectful, healthy, and collaborative workplace culture. Supporting our staff is essential to ensuring they are able to do their best work in service to children, youth, families, Elders, and the broader community.

Belonging Through Culture: Indigenous Youth Connections

Made possible through a grant from the **New Relationship Trust**, the *Belonging Through Culture: Indigenous Youth Connections* project provided culturally grounded opportunities for Indigenous youth in and from care to reconnect with their identity, community, and the land. These experiences fostered a strong sense of belonging, supported holistic wellness, and strengthened intergenerational relationships.

A key strength of the project was the integration of cultural guidance through Elders and the use of Indigenous-sourced materials, ensuring authenticity and respect throughout the activities. Strong participant engagement highlighted the continued need for culturally grounded programming and demonstrated how these opportunities can contribute to cultural revitalization, youth resilience, and stronger community connections.

North Island Elders Wellness Gathering

The North Island Elders Wellness Gathering, held May 13–14, 2025, was a highlight of the year. The gathering brought together Elders from several North Island Nations to support wellness, self-care, cultural sharing, and intergenerational connection. It created a meaningful space for laughter, relationship building, and healing, with a strong emphasis on connection and community care.

Sasamans Elders value these gatherings as opportunities to connect with one another and with younger generations. These intergenerational relationships create important opportunities for cultural learning, knowledge sharing, mentorship, and mutual support.

Youth Rising Together: Walking Out Strong

Between March and May 2025, twelve Indigenous youth in and from care gathered each week in a circle of safety, creativity, and belonging through *Youth Rising Together: Walking Out Strong*. Supported through a grant from the *Representative for Children and Youth*, this pilot initiative

was created with and for youth who know the child welfare system from the inside.

Over eight weeks, participants built a shared story through clay, paint, laughter, tears, ceremony, and truth. While art was an important part of the program, its deeper purpose was to create a safe and welcoming space where young people could feel at home, share their experiences, and begin to see themselves as whole. The program provided opportunities for youth to reclaim culture, identity, and voice within systems that can too often leave them feeling unheard.

Each week offered food, warmth, ceremony, and consistent adult support from people who showed up not simply as authorities, but as allies. Through this consistency, youth began to relax, build trust, and share stories of both harm and hope. Participants created symbols of their lives through clay canoes and masks and painted whales, blossoms, and rivers onto a mural representing their collective experiences and resilience.

One message captured the heart of the program: **"Listen to me."**

Walking Out Strong was more than a creative program. It was an opportunity for youth to reclaim their voices and identities, strengthen their sense of belonging, and call for change. The laughter, tears, creativity, and honesty shared throughout the program demonstrated the importance of creating spaces where Indigenous youth can be heard, supported, and valued.

Our Children Our Way 2025

Sasamans Society supported 11 staff members to attend the 4th Annual *Our Children Our Way* Conference, held at the Vancouver Convention Centre from November 2–5, 2025. Hosted by the *Our Children Our Way Society*, the conference brought together more than 1,200 delegates from across Canada and featured workshops and presentations focused on Indigenous-led approaches and practices supporting the well-being of Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities.

A memorable highlight was the keynote presentation by Dr. Cindy Blackstock, a longstanding advocate for Indigenous children. Her words emphasized the importance of collective action and called on all of us to stand together to ensure Indigenous children do not continue to experience injustice and inequality.

Our staff participated in a range of workshops and presentations, gaining knowledge and inspiration that can be brought back into our programs and services. Staff also participated in self-care and wellness sessions, providing an opportunity for healing, reflection, and rejuvenation.

Mamalilikulla First Nation Designated Band Representative Partnership

March 31, 2026, marked the conclusion of a 6.5-year collaboration with Mamalilikulla First Nation (MFN) in the delivery of the Designated Band Representative (DBR) Program.

Established in 2019 at the request of MFN Chief and Council, the partnership provided Sasamans Society with an opportunity to support MFN in developing and delivering its DBR program for children and families involved with the child welfare system.

Over the course of the partnership, the DBR program advocated for the Nation's voice, position, culture, family connections, and community interests in child welfare matters. The DBR also supported families through meetings, court proceedings, case planning, and connections with service providers. This unique arrangement provided MFN with a strong foundation for its DBR program while ensuring children and families received culturally appropriate advocacy and support.

In March 2026, MFN advised Sasamans that the DBR program would transition under the Nation's direct leadership and its newly established Child and Family Services department. Sasamans Society is grateful to MFN Chief and Council for the opportunity to support the Nation, its DBR program, and MFN children and families over the past 6.5 years. We wish MFN continued success as it carries this important work forward.

Indigenous Family Justice Support Worker

Sasamans Society continues to seek opportunities to expand and strengthen programming in response to community needs. This year, we were pleased to launch

the *Indigenous Family Justice Support Worker (IFJSW)* program, providing an important new source of culturally responsive support for Indigenous individuals and families navigating complex family law matters.

The program was established to help reduce barriers to justice by providing court navigation, legal information, advocacy, document support, and assistance accessing services such as Legal Aid. This support is particularly important for families experiencing separation, parenting disputes, child support matters, family violence, or concurrent involvement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD).

During its first year, the program supported clients with a range of matters, including parenting responsibilities and time, guardianship, custody, child support and enforcement, as well as family law and MCFD complaint processes. Clients received assistance with court preparation, legal documents, Legal Aid applications, and procedural requirements.

Ongoing collaboration with MCFD, Family Maintenance BC, Legal Aid, and other community partners strengthened coordinated service delivery and helped establish strong foundational relationships with both clients and community partners.

Overall, the first year demonstrated a clear community need for culturally responsive family justice support and established a strong foundation for the program's continued growth. The IFJSW is an important addition to Sasamans Society's continuum of support, helping Indigenous individuals and families navigate complex systems with greater confidence, connection, and culturally responsive support.

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!

Annual Program Reports
2025-2026

Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator – Campbell River

Janine Gatzke

2025/26 Program Update

A major focus of the IOFN program has been developing and maintaining positive and trusting relationships with families. Consistency, transparency, and being flexible and open-minded to individual family needs have been important parts of building trusting relationships. When families have experienced periods of crisis, support has sometimes included daily check ins until their situation became more stable and connections to community supports were established.

Increasing knowledge and experience with the child welfare system, MCFD practices, court procedures, and the CFCSA have strengthened the IOFN's ability to provide information and clarity to families when they have questions or are unsure about what is happening. An important part of this is being transparent when an answer is not immediately known and taking the time to seek out accurate information. Support and guidance from co-workers at Sasamans Society, along with developing relationships with MCFD workers and other community professionals, have also helped strengthen the support available to families.

One of the most meaningful successes during this period has been witnessing the strength, tenacity, and resilience of parents working towards reunification. Families have continued moving forward through challenging circumstances, setbacks, and barriers while remaining committed to the goals they have for themselves and their children. Parents have engaged with services, addressed difficult areas of concern, strengthened communication with their social workers, found their voice through self-advocacy, and continued building greater stability within their lives.

The IOFN has also assisted families in connecting to community resources and developing strong support networks. The IOFN has witnessed families having little to no support go on to make connections with a broad range of services and people that they can reach out to when they need to, which strengthened their foundation and stability. Seeing families go from feeling isolated and unsure of where to turn to having a network of people supporting them has been a significant success.

Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator – Port Hardy

Andrea Tate

2025/26 Program Update

This year, the Port Hardy IOFN Program supported families in strengthening communication skills, establishing consistent routines, and developing family goals that promote stability and well-being. Families were supported to create routines with their children and to work collaboratively with their MCFD workers to develop Safety Plans/Family Plans, that reflect their needs and goals. Several clients were supported to

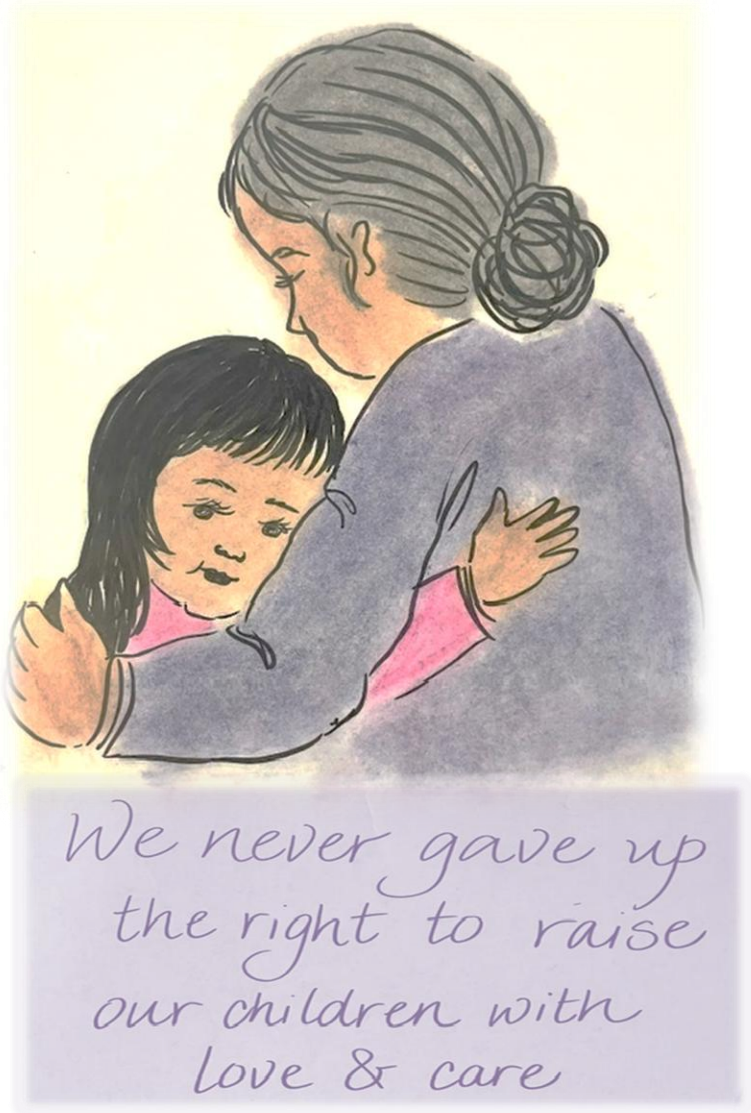


access detox and substance use treatment services. With one exception, all clients who entered treatment were able to complete both detox and treatment. As a result, children were either reunified with their parents or caregivers or remained safely in their care. Clients were also connected to counselling and other community-based services to support their ongoing well-being and family stability.

Building and strengthening relationships with community partners continues to be an important part of the program. Collaboration with programs, organizations, and service providers has created stronger pathways for families to access support and develop the resilience, confidence, and determination needed to create healthy and supportive homes for their children.

The Port Hardy IOFN Program continues to work alongside local First Nations, as well as First Nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan when supporting clients whose home communities are outside British Columbia. These relationships are particularly meaningful for families seeking to reconnect with their heritage, culture, and community.

Families continue to demonstrate significant resilience and determination as they work toward creating safe, supportive environments for their children. The Port Hardy IOFN office remains an important and welcoming space where families, parents, grandparents, and community partners can meet in an environment that feels comfortable, relational, and family-centred.



Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator – Courtenay

Cecilia Plecas

2025/26 Program Update

Throughout the year, the IOFN in strengthened relationships with families, community partners, and local service providers through meaningful participation in community engagements, collaborative tables, professional development, and community events. These connections created opportunities to bring forward the voices, experiences, and strengths of Indigenous children and families.

The IOFN participated on the *Comox Valley Early Years Collaborative* steering committee, contributing an Indigenous perspective and helping ensure that the experiences and priorities of Indigenous families were reflected in collaborative discussions. The IOFN also continued its involvement with the *Comox Valley Substance Use Collaborative* CVSUC (formerly CVSUS), joining a working group to help shape the future direction of the collaborative. Additionally, the IOFN supported conversations focused on building greater understanding, compassion, and community responsibility toward people experiencing homelessness through the Business Engagement meetings.

Participation in the *Situation Table*, *Children and Youth Matter Comox Valley*, and *Violence in Relationship* meetings further strengthened the IOFN's understanding

of local needs and emerging trends, while creating opportunities for shared learning and coordinated community responses.

Professional development included *Indigenous Cultural Safety* training with *British Columbia Council for Families* and Communities Alliances and Networks training focused on intimate partner violence through an Indigenous lens while also exploring the life stages of plants and their connections to healing and prevention, providing an opportunity to deepen culturally grounded practice.

The IOFN also mentored a first-year Social Service Diploma student from NIC, sharing Indigenous perspectives on child protection and creating a meaningful reciprocal learning experience.

A significant success was the closure of several files as families made progress toward their goals. Where families relocated, connections to Campbell River IOFN and Indigenous Parenting Support Worker helped support continuity of culturally responsive services.

The IOFN also participated in *International Overdose Awareness Day*, a *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* event, and the first *Early Years Child Fair*. Together, these experiences strengthened relationships, expanded learning, and supported the continued growth of culturally grounded, community-based practice.



Indigenous Youth Navigator – Campbell River

Monica White

2025/26 Program Update

This year was about building belonging and connection for youth in and from care. Over 8 weeks, twelve youth came together for the *Youth Rising Together: Walking Out Strong* group, Representative for Children and Youth research project working with an Indigenous art therapist and Elders to build community, recording youth voices to inform system change.

The *New Relationship Trust* funding supported land based cultural activities throughout the year, including cedar bark harvesting, canoe outings, and moccasin making with Elders and Indigenous facilitators.

Monica partnered with Campbell River RCMP to launch a TikTok account for Indigenous youth in and from care, now at 268 followers and featured in the CR Mirror. Monica also spoke at the Housing Symposium, drawing on lived experience and frontline knowledge to speak to the urgent need for emergency youth housing. For most of the year, Monica managed both caseloads as the sole Navigator. As referrals continue to rise, this highlights the need for two positions to meet community demand.



Campbell River Youth in Care Network

This marks the 8th year Sasamans has hosted the *Campbell River Youth in Care Network*, continuing to build community and connection for youth in and from care across the region. This year's *Child & Youth in Care Week*, themed Enchanted Forest, drew 140 attendees, celebrating youth and honouring the relationships that support them. The annual Christmas Party, held alongside *Foundry* Campbell River, welcomed over 70 participants, including 36 youth and young adults, 7 children and babies, and 27 dedicated adult supporters who helped before, during, and after the celebration. Youth also came together for a beaded feather workshop with 6 participants, and a spring luncheon that drew 25 participants, featuring lasagna and Devil's Club necklace-making led by community facilitators. Each gathering offers a warm, culturally grounded space where youth in and from care can connect with trusted adults and be reminded that they are seen, valued, and part of a larger community.

Indigenous Youth Connections Project

Funded by New Relationship Trust

The Indigenous Youth Connections Project has created meaningful and culturally grounded opportunities for Indigenous youth in care and those who have aged out of care to reconnect with their identity, community, and the land. Through hands-on cultural activities such as cedar bark harvesting, cedar weaving, canoeing, moccasin making, and beading eagle feathers, youth were provided with safe and supportive spaces to learn, engage, and build relationships.

The project was met with strong interest and positive engagement from participants. Youth responded enthusiastically to culturally rooted programming, with many expressing a renewed sense of connection to their culture and identity. The smaller group settings fostered trust, allowing for meaningful mentorship and open dialogue between youth, Elders, and knowledge keepers. These intergenerational connections were a significant strength of the program.

Time spent on the land and participation in cultural practices contributed to holistic wellness through supporting mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural well-being. Youth reported an increased sense of belonging and connection to community, which is particularly meaningful for those who have experienced disconnection through the child welfare system.

The project also supported skill development in traditional arts such as weaving, beading, and moccasin making. These skills not only strengthen cultural knowledge but also create potential pathways for future economic opportunities. Additionally, the intentional sourcing of materials from Indigenous-owned businesses contributed to local Indigenous economic development while maintaining cultural integrity.

A key success was the integration of an Elders Navigator role, which ensured that programming was guided by appropriate cultural knowledge and teachings. This strengthened relationships with Elders and enhanced the overall quality and cultural safety of each gathering.

Building on this momentum, Sasamans hosted a Spring Lunch on March 31, 2026, bringing youth and Elders together for a shared meal and a Devil's Club workshop. This gathering will continue to foster connection, cultural learning, and community engagement in a welcoming environment.

During the project period, there was a temporary shift in staffing capacity, which impacted the number of gatherings that could be delivered. While this resulted in some project funds remaining unspent, the team responded by prioritizing the quality and cultural integrity of each session rather than the quantity.

This experience highlighted the importance of flexibility in program planning, particularly for culturally grounded and land-based initiatives. It also reinforced the need for strong, ongoing relationships with Elders, knowledge keepers, and community partners to ensure

programming remains responsive, respectful, and meaningful.

Despite some operational challenges, the Indigenous Youth Connections Project has had a significant and positive impact. The program has contributed to cultural revitalization, strengthened relationships between youth and community knowledge holders, and supported Nation building by fostering cultural pride, confidence, and resilience.

The strong response from participants underscores the ongoing need for culturally grounded programming for Indigenous youth in and from care. This project has demonstrated that investing in these initiatives is essential to supporting youth wellness, strengthening identity, and building lasting connections between youth, culture, and community.

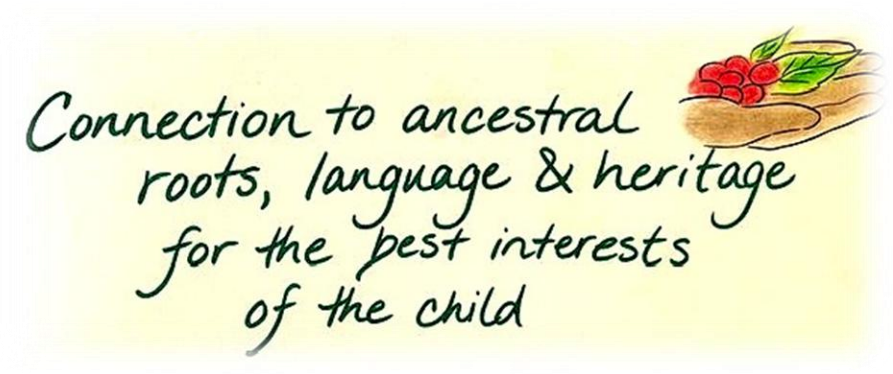
Cultural Connections – Campbell River

Rachel Cain

2025/26 Program Update

Over the past year, the Cultural Connections Worker (CCW) has worked closely with community partners to continue to find ways to support one another's programs and contribute to long term positive change for the Indigenous families we work alongside. The CCW was approached by the Wachiay Friendship Centre in Courtenay to share teachings around the ROOTS program and to help provide their new staff with an extensive knowledge base of the role and to provide support when needed as we had previously been for former staff in the Roots Program based there.

The CCW collaborated closely with local First Nations communities to enhance our abilities to provide support and education around the children and youth in care and their unique needs. For example, exploring ways to train prospective community mentors and provide more inclusive opportunities for extended family to participate in our work. The CCW worked in partnership with MCFD, Mamalilikulla, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum to explore foster parent recruitment opportunities and education amongst their membership.



Indigenous Parenting Support Worker – Campbell River

Christina Paling

2025/26 Program Update

From November 17, 2025, to March 31, 2026, the Indigenous Parenting Support Program provided individualized, strengths-based support to 31 families, providing individualized, strengths-based support focused on strengthening family well-being and parenting capacity. During this period, the program established meaningful relationships with families and supported parents in navigating complex circumstances while building practical skills, confidence, and stability.

Programming expanded through the introduction of our first *Grief Recovery Method* program and preparation for *Circle of Security Parenting*, creating opportunities for parents to develop a greater understanding of themselves, their children, and their relationships. The

program also strengthened connections with Indigenous and community service providers, improving collaboration and pathways to support. A key focus throughout the year was meeting families where they were, responding to immediate needs while supporting longer-term goals around parenting, housing, family connection, and overall stability. Professional development in family support, cultural perspectives, and *Circle of Security Parenting* strengthened the program's ability to provide responsive and culturally informed support.

Indigenous Family Justice Support Worker – Campbell River

Carolina Rondeau

2025/26 Program Update



Throughout the year, the *Indigenous Family Justice Support Worker Program* strengthened access to justice for Indigenous families navigating separation, parenting disputes, child support, and child welfare matters.

Through individualized advocacy, court preparation, legal aid assistance, commissioning for affidavits and statutory declarations, the program helped families navigate complex systems with dignity and confidence.

Key achievements included securing a protection order for a client experiencing family violence and supporting other families by facilitating an out-of-court agreements, court forms support reducing emotional and financial strain. Collaborative efforts also helped connect families with essential supports, including Jordan's Principle.

By March 31, 2026, the program reported 26 open client files, reflecting the growing demand for accessible family justice services.

The program continues to empower Indigenous families through culturally safe, trauma-informed support, promoting family stability, children's well-being, and informed decision-making while ensuring families do not have to navigate the justice system alone.

Indigenous Justice Support Worker – Campbell River

Lisa Miller

2025/26 Program Update

Throughout the year, the program strengthened connections with clients and community partners while supporting individuals to address complex barriers related to housing, recovery, justice, health, and family reunification. Significant successes included supporting clients to complete detox and 90-day treatment programs, with several transitioning into second-stage housing after experiencing prolonged periods of homelessness. Clients also secured and maintained independent housing, obtained employment, progressed through court requirements, and strengthened relationships with their children. One

client achieved sobriety while maintaining second-stage housing and progressing toward reunification with their child. Youth were supported to transition from couch surfing into their first homes, while others received coordinated support through aging-out-of-care planning.

Strong relationships with recovery programs, probation, community health services, group homes, and child welfare partners enhanced coordinated and timely support. Assistance with disability applications, community service requirements, phones, appointments, and safety planning also improved client access to essential services.

Ongoing challenges included the limited availability and affordability of housing, particularly for youth and individuals with limited income or rental references. Phone access remained a barrier once short-term phone supports expired. The closure of downtown services also increased challenges related to food security and access to safe shelter.

Indigenous Elders Navigator/Harmony Circle of Elders – Campbell River/Courtenay

2025/26 Program Update

The Elders Navigator program continues to provide a meaningful space where Indigenous Elders can gather, build friendships, share culture, have fun, and experience connection and care. At the heart of the program are the Elders themselves, whose knowledge, humour, stories, lived experiences, and generosity strengthen one another and enrich the broader community.

Throughout the year, Elders had opportunities to connect with community partners, participate in cultural and creative activities, and build relationships rooted in mutual respect and reciprocity. These gatherings support healing and wellness while creating space for Elders to mentor youth and one another, share teachings, and pass knowledge forward.

One particularly meaningful experience was a ceremony with the local Quilters Guild, who honoured group of Elders as part of their heartfelt commitment to reconciliation. Each of the Elders were blanketed with a handmade quilt as an expression of reconciliation, comfort, and respect. The Elders were deeply moved by the care and thoughtfulness behind each quilt. In return, the Elders presented the quilters with authentic handmade beaded necklaces, created by one of the Elders as a token of appreciation and gratitude. The ceremony also included a touching moment when the Elders gifted both the Elders Navigator and the Art Therapist with the same beaded necklaces to thank them for the kindness, support, and connection they have shown.

This exchange beautifully reflected the values at the centre of the Elders Navigator program: reciprocity, cultural sharing, relationship, and collective care. It demonstrated how meaningful connections between Elders, community members, and service providers can create opportunities for understanding, healing, and reconciliation.

Wellness activities are central to Elder health and wellbeing, the Elders participated in creating their own aromatherapy oils while exploring traditional scents and natural ingredients associated with relaxation, comfort, and healing. This activity provided an opportunity for the Elders to share knowledge, memories, and personal experiences while learning together in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The Elders also participated in chair yoga, supporting mobility, balance, flexibility, and mindfulness in a way that respects individual abilities and comfort levels. Beyond the physical benefits, these activities created space for laughter, conversation, friendship, and reflection.

Together, these experiences reflect a holistic approach to Elder wellness that recognizes the importance of caring for the whole person. By creating opportunities to nurture the mind, body, and spirit, the Elders Navigator program supports Elders in maintaining wellness, strengthening relationships, and enjoying meaningful connection with one another and their community.

The Elders Navigator program is more than a service. It is a place where Elders are valued, celebrated, supported, and given opportunities to continue contributing their gifts and wisdom to children, youth families and community. Wellness and connection remain important parts of the Elders Navigator program, with activities designed to nurture the mind, body, and spirit. Elders participated in hands-on wellness activities that encouraged relaxation, creativity, cultural connection, and shared learning.

Jordan's Principle – Campbell River

Marisa Anthony

2025/26 Program Update

Jordan's Principle Overview: Jordan's Principle ensures that First Nations children can access the products, services, and supports they need, when they need them. During this fiscal year, Sasamans Society's Jordan's Principle team included:

Service Coordinator - Marisa Anthony
Approved Request Contingency (ARC) Fund Administrator - Jacquie Henderson/ Hannah Cooksley
Jordan's Principle Liaison - Jayme Johnson
Group Request Administrator - Malia Grief

Service Coordination: The Service Coordinator manages the front-end of the Jordan's Principle process, working with families and service providers to identify children's unique and unmet needs, gather documentation and submit Jordan's Principle applications to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), and connect families with additional community resources and funding opportunities where applicable.

This fiscal year, 178 individual applications and 6 group applications were submitted to support the needs of First Nations children and youth. Funding approval highlights include funding for a 1.0 FTE Clinical Counsellor position with Laichwiltach Family Life Society and Inclusive Education Funding to support 3 First Nations students at Campbell River Christian School. Sasamans also hosted a Group Request Workshop, bringing together North Island Service Coordination teams, Nation representatives, and service providers for an information and brainstorming session with a Jordan's Principle Program Officer from Indigenous Services Canada. The session focused on how group requests can be used to highlight systemic gaps and meet the needs of multiple children more efficiently.

Backlogged requests and the subsequent February 10, 2025 Operational Bulletin from ISC continue to create challenges. Application requirements are now more rigorous while funding opportunities are more limited.

Approved Request Contingency (ARC) Fund Administrator: In the past, Indigenous Services Canada had been operating Jordan's Principle solely on a reimbursement model, which could take months (or

years) to pay families and service providers. The premise of ARC is that ISC provides up-front funds to ARC organizations, such as Sasamans, and then those organizations manage the payment process in a timely manner for approved Jordan's Principle applications.

Jordan's Principle Liaison: The Liaison position was created to assist Jordan's Principle clients while they wait for ISC approvals and in addition to ISC approvals. The Liaison completes an intake session to learn the client's history and current situation, then connects them with local resources whether it be the Food Bank, the Centre of Hope or Laichwiltach Community Health Centre, to name a few.

Group Request Administrator: BC is currently under-utilizing group requests in comparison to the rest of the country. In an effort to decrease administrative burden and increase the number of Group Requests submitted to Jordan's Principle, Indigenous Services Canada has provided pilot funding for a Group Request Administrator. Malia Grief started in this position in March 2026 and has already begun work to identify where group requests are most needed.

*New Program

Jordan's Principle Group Request Administrator

Malia Grief

In March 2026, Sasamans Society expanded its Jordan's Principle team with the addition of a Jordan's Principle Group Request Administrator position, funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). This role strengthened the organization's capacity to support communities and service providers with the development, coordination, and administration of Group Requests under Jordan's Principle.

The Jordan's Principle Group Request initiative provides communities and organizations in British Columbia with an opportunity to address shared needs among groups of First Nations children through coordinated requests for health, social, educational, and cultural supports. Rather than requiring separate requests for each child, the initiative allows eligible services to be requested collectively when a common need has been identified. This approach can reduce administrative barriers, strengthen coordinated service delivery, and support timely access to culturally appropriate services for children and families. Each child's eligibility, needs, and benefit from the requested service must still be clearly identified as part of the request.

*New Program

Indigenous Family Justice & Safety Program

Carolina Rondeau

In July 2026, Sasamans Society launched the Indigenous Family Justice & Safety Program to support Indigenous individuals and families navigating family law, child protection, separation, parenting, family conflict, and gender-based violence. The program provides culturally safe, trauma-informed, and community-driven support that helps individuals understand their rights and options while navigating complex legal and social service systems.

More than providing referrals or assistance with court processes, the program walks alongside families to promote safety, dignity, informed decision-making, healing, and self-determination. Support may include family justice navigation, safety planning, advocacy,

mediation where appropriate, court preparation, safe child exchange planning, referrals to legal and community resources, and connections with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, cultural supports, and ceremony.

The program recognizes the ongoing impacts of colonialism, systemic racism, displacement, and intergenerational trauma, and the barriers Indigenous families can experience within legal, child welfare, and social service systems. Gender-based violence safety is integrated throughout the program, with risk and safety considered from initial contact through closure. Mediation and joint processes are used only when voluntary, appropriate, and safe.

Serving Indigenous women, girls, men, boys, youth, Elders, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people throughout the North Island corridor, the program is grounded in relationship, cultural connection, and practical support. By walking alongside families early, the program seeks to reduce escalation, strengthen access to justice and community supports, protect children and vulnerable family members, and create pathways toward greater safety, healing, and family well-being.

Mamalilikulla First Nation Report

Prepared by MFN Child & Family Services

Tasleem Mall, BSW, RSW
Alicia Carlow, BSW

Since April 2020, the Designated Band Representative (DBR) role for Mamalilikulla First Nation has been developed through a collaborative relationship with Sasamans Society, with Sasamans providing administrative oversight, mentorship, program support, and social work guidance as the Nation worked to strengthen its capacity in child and family services.

Throughout this work, there has been regular consultation and collaboration with Mamalilikulla Administration and Chief and Council. Together, the shared goal has been to strengthen the Nation's ability to respond to child protection matters, advocate for Mamalilikulla children and families, and move increasingly toward the exercise of Mamalilikulla's inherent jurisdiction over our children and families.

Registered Social Worker Tasleem Mall was hired through Sasamans Society in collaboration with Mamalilikulla Administration. Through her work as the Designated Band Representative, Tasleem has been integral in helping establish a strong foundation of social work practice, advocacy, and front-line support for Mamalilikulla members involved with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

At the heart of the DBR role is walking alongside Mamalilikulla families throughout their involvement with MCFD. This includes helping families understand their rights, navigate available services, participate meaningfully in planning, and access the support they need to address concerns and work toward reunification with their children. The role also supports the Nation in exercising its voice and responsibilities in the planning and care of Mamalilikulla children. This includes participating with MCFD in planning for children in foster care, strengthening cultural and family connections, providing cultural resources to children and caregivers, supporting parents to identify their strengths and needs,

and continually working toward safe opportunities for children to return home.

The work of the Designated Band Representative also extends beyond the regional service area of Sasamans Society. Mamalilikulla children and families live throughout British Columbia and in other provinces, requiring the DBR to work with families, First Nations, service providers, provincial ministries, delegated agencies, and other organizations across multiple communities 1 and jurisdictions. This broader reach helps ensure that Mamalilikulla children and families continue to receive advocacy, support, and culturally meaningful connections regardless of where they live, while supporting children to remain connected to their families, culture, community, identity, and Nation.

Another important area of this work has been identifying and connecting with relatives who may be able to provide short or long-term care for Mamalilikulla children. Keeping our children connected to family, culture, community, and identity is central to their well-being. A strong sense of belonging can help lessen the harm caused by disconnection and support children as they grow.

Throughout 2025, the Designated Band Representative continued supporting three ongoing reunifications of children returning to the care of their parents. New relationships were also strengthened with Mamalilikulla children and families living throughout British Columbia and in other provinces, including children in Continuing Custody of the Ministry. One significant success was supporting a family placement that saw a young Mamalilikulla child return to the care of a relative after three years in foster care. Tasleem has also continued to advocate for Mamalilikulla children in care to receive appropriate assessments, diagnoses, educational supports, and other services so that their needs are understood and supported both while in care and, where reunification occurs, as they return to their families.

Housing and access to treatment programming continue to create significant barriers for some families. Addressing those barriers requires broader community and provincial responses. Relationship-building with service providers therefore remains an important part of child and family services work, including providing letters of support, following up consistently on applications, advocating for access to services, and coordinating supports around families.

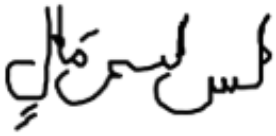
Throughout the development of this work, Sasamans Society provided ongoing guidance and support to the Designated Band Representative through its broader network of community programs. The Cultural Connections Worker, Elders Navigator, Indigenous Outreach Family Navigator, Youth Navigators, Parent Support Workers, Family Justice Support Worker, and Jordan's Principle team have all contributed to supporting Mamalilikulla children, families, and Elders. Mamalilikulla First Nation recognizes that these programs are carried by committed professionals who provide advocacy, connection, care, and unconditional positive regard to the Indigenous people and families they walk alongside. We are deeply grateful for the support Sasamans Society and its staff have provided to Mamalilikulla membership.

It is with that gratitude that Mamalilikulla First Nation is proud to share that one of the original goals of this partnership has been accomplished. The Nation has built the internal capacity to bring the Designated Band Representative role home. The DBR role has now transitioned to the Mamalilikulla First Nation Administrative Office and will operate within Mamalilikulla Child and Family Services. The work will be managed and mentored by Alicia Carlow, Indigenous 2 Social Worker and Director of Child and Family Services. This transition is not an ending to the relationship with Sasamans. Rather, it represents the success of capacity-building and an opportunity to enter a new phase of partnership. Mamalilikulla First Nation wants our community and membership to know that Sasamans

Society continues to offer valuable support, resources, services, and programming through its locations in Campbell River, Port Hardy, and Courtenay.

Mamalilikulla Councillor Bert Boucher, who serves as Chair of the Sasamans Society Board of Directors, will continue working alongside Mamalilikulla Child and Family Services as we build on our relationship with Sasamans as a valued partner and collaborator. Together, we can continue strengthening the capacity of both the Nation and community-serving organizations to respond to the social realities affecting Indigenous families, recognize the strengths already present within our people, and create the conditions for children, families, and communities to thrive. Bringing this work home is an important step in Mamalilikulla's continued journey toward caring for our children and families in ways that reflect our own responsibilities, relationships, values, and inherent jurisdiction. We look forward to continuing this work together.

Gilakas'la (thank you) to Sasamans Society for helping



Tasleem Mall BSW, RSW
Designated Band Representative
Mamalilikulla First Nation



Alicia Carlow, BSW
Child and Family Services Director
Mamalilikulla First Nation

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:

- Da'naxda'xw/Awaetlala First Nation
- Mamalilikulla First Nation
- We Wai Kai First Nation
- Wei Wai Kum Nation
- K'omoks First Nation
- Kwikwasut'inuxw/Haxwa'mis First Nation
- Quatsino First Nation
- Tlatlasikwala First Nation
- Dzawada'enuxw First Nation
- Gwa'sala-Naxwada'xw Nations
- Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre
- Laichwiltach Family Life Society
- Wachiay Friendship Centre
- John Howard Society/Foundry
- The Federation of BC Youth in Care Network
- Ministry of Children and Family Development

PROGRAM FUNDING 2025/2026

Aboriginal Service Innovation (ASI) - MCFD Provincial Office • Indigenous Family Navigator - Port Hardy and Campbell River • Indigenous Youth Navigator - Campbell River	Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Jordan's Principle Program • Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator, • ARC Administrator • Liaison Support
Prevention and Family Support - MCFD Provincial Office • Parenting Support Worker - Campbell River and Courtenay • Indigenous Family Navigator - Campbell River and Courtenay	Federation of BC Youth in Care Network • Campbell River Youth in Care Network
Roots Program - MCFD Campbell River Regional Office • Cultural Connections Worker – Campbell River	New Relationship Trust • Youth Program Grant
First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) • Indigenous Outreach Elders Navigator	Law Foundation of BC • Indigenous Justice Support - Campbell River
Mamalilikulla First Nation • Designated Band Representative • Cultural Connections Liaison	BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres • Indigenous Family Justice Support - Campbell River

2026/2027 Sasamans Society Team

Andrea Tate	Indigenous Family Navigator	Port Hardy
Monica White	Indigenous Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Thomas Wamiss	Indigenous Youth Navigator	Campbell River
Rachel Cain	Cultural Connections Worker	Campbell River
Marisa Anthony	Jordan's Principle Service Coordinator	Campbell River
Malia May Grief	Jordan's Principle Group Request Support Worker	Campbell River
Alysha Gaudreault	Jordan's Principle ARC Administrator	Campbell River
Cecilia Plecas	Indigenous Family Navigator	Courtenay
Janine Gatzke	Indigenous Family Navigator	Campbell River
Sarah Atwood	Indigenous Elders Navigator	Campbell River
Christina Paling	Indigenous Parenting Support Worker	Campbell River
Carolina Rondeau	Indigenous Family Justice Support Worker	Campbell River
Fiona Hansed	Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper	Campbell River
Mary Henderson	Reception	Campbell River
Lori Bull	Executive Director	Campbell River

Current Sasamans Society Board of Directors

Bert Boucher	Chair	Mamalilikulla First Nation
Richard Dawson	Vice-Chair	Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre
Shelly Haunch	Treasurer	Wei Wai Kum First Nation
Vera Peacey	Secretary	Laichwiltach Family Life Society
Cindy Inrig	Director	We Wai Kai First Nation
Taylor Williams	Director	Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Tribe
Susan Savoie	Director	K'omoks First Nation
Willie Moon	Director	Dzawada'enuxw First Nation
Patricia Hall	Director	Quatsino First Nation

Sasamans

Our children

