

Scw'exmx Child and Family

Nlaka'pamux Framework of Practice

NAM ?ES ZÚMINSTM



**Prepared by the Nlaka'pamux communities of
Coldwater Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band,
Nooaitch Indian Band, and Shackan Indian Band**

Coordinated by Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society

June 25, 2018

About Nam ʔes zúminstm

In the Nlakaʔamux language, *Nam ʔes zúminstm* means to give care, love, and guidance. This is not just about the physical nourishing of our children, it is also the spiritual nurturing. We train our children to know that as they walk here on this physical plane there are layers of beliefs and values that they need to learn that come from the land and the culture.

About Scwʔexmx, People of the Creeks

Scwʔexmx are unique in that we have among us two distinct Nations: Nlakaʔamux and Syilx. We honour our differences and the places where we work together as Scwʔexmx, People of the Creeks.

About this document

Nam ʔes zúminstm is the foundation of a new framework of practice for working with families and children in Nlakaʔamux communities that is grounded in the people's voices, experiences, and culture. Two companion documents are also being developed:

- *Care Plans Based in Culture*
- *Parenting Handbook: Nlakaʔamux Elders Share Their Wisdom*

The Syilx Nation already has a *Syilx Child and Family Framework* and an accompanying *Handbook for Families* in which Okanagan Elders share their wisdom about parenting and building strong family systems.

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Executive Summary

Background

This project was undertaken by Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society with funding from the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC). The work has been community-based with extensive engagement and oversight provided by community members from children to Elders. To reflect the vision, input, and direction provided by the people, this document is written in the collective voice of the communities speaking about “our children” and “our families.”

About the Scw'exmx

The Scw'exmx are the People of the Creeks. The word is taken from the name of the Nicola River, Scw'ex, which means “creek.” There are five bands in the Nicola Valley who comprise the Scw'exmx: Coldwater Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, Shackan Indian Band, and Upper Nicola Band. Four of the bands are members of the Nlaka'pamux Nation and the fifth, Upper Nicola, is a member of the Syilx Nation.

Together, the five Scw'exmx communities total over 3,000 individuals. As members of the Nlaka'pamux Nation, the communities have connections to the entire Nlaka'pamux territory, which spans a large region in the south central interior of British Columbia stretching from the Fraser Canyon and Princeton in the south to Cache Creek and Kamloops in the north, and bordering the territory of the Syilx-Okanagan and Secwepemc peoples. The Shackan Indian Band has three reserves. The majority of band members reside on the main reserve, located along the Nicola River just west of Merritt. The Lower Nicola Indian Band reserve community and offices are located at Shulus, six km west of Merritt. The main Coldwater Reserve area is located 13 km southwest of Merritt. The Nooaitch First Nation reserve community and offices are located at Merritt.

About Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society

Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society (SCFSS) delivers services to the five Scw'exmx bands. SCFSS works collaboratively to facilitate opportunities for children, families and communities to achieve their full potential and realize a healthy quality of life through the expression of ancestral beliefs, values and instructions. The mission of SCFSS is to:

- Complement the work of our families and member communities by designing and delivering programs and services that meet their needs.

- Advocate for children, families and communities to ensure their unique needs are heard and acted upon.
- Respect that ultimate authority for the health and well-being of children rests with their families and caregivers.
- Educate all levels of the system to inform and influence policies, practices and standards that reflect our cultural worldview.

Services provided include: Child Protection, Guardianship, Family Group Conference, Family Support Services, Foster Care, Kinship Care, Cultural support Services, Mental Health, Caregiver Supports, Youth Supports.

Project Overview

The work that informs this document has been a collaborative process with the four Nlaka’pamux bands in order to create a framework of practice that is grounded in Nlaka’pamux ways.

Nam ʔes zúminstm was coordinated by Scw’emx Child and Family, but the vision, information, and direction came from the four Scw’emx communities of Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, and Shackan. The Upper Nicola Band already has a Syilx framework that was developed by the Syilx Nation and Scw’emx Child and Family uses the Syilx framework in its work with Upper Nicola families.

In western terminology, this document outlines a framework for Scw’emx Child and Family that grounds its service delivery in the teachings, practices, and principles that have guided the Nlaka’pamux since time immemorial.

In the language of the Nlaka’pamux, **Nam ʔes zúminstm** means to give care, love and guidance. It means that we are looking after not just the physical nourishing of our children, but their spiritual nurturing also.

As with life and its cycles, the process of developing this document has been fluid – and will continue to be fluid. This is a living document that will grow and change as Nlaka’pamux nk’seytkn (family) ways are revitalized.

Who is this for? Staff of organizations that serve our citizens.

Who does it cover? This framework covers our citizens, wherever they reside.

Caveat: When you are in Nlaka’pamux territory, you follow Nlaka’pamux protocols. Nlaka’pamux are an inclusive and oral society. Our people are revitalizing our ways and discussing them and with the changes of putting things in writing, this process is not intended to allow people to make assumptions, and cannot be used to deny anyone service.

Section 1: What Are We Making?

This document is a way of articulating Nlaka’pamux teachings about nk’seytkn systems and moving towards a communal and ceremonial way of working with Indigenous people in Nlaka’pamux territory. There is no template. The approach outlined here has existed forever in the time immemorial ways of the Nlaka’pamux – it just had not been written down before now.

Drawing inspiration and direction from our rich tradition of Nlaka’pamux basket making, this document is energized by the collective work of weaving baskets to hold our children safe.

The long term vision – shared by Scw’emx Child and Family Services and the four Nlaka’pamux communities – is for strong, healthy nk’seytkn systems.

- Culture is the basis – apply Nlaka’pamux principles to the work of supporting our children and families
- Respect difference
- Decolonize social work
- Be proactive and strength-based
- Create a living document that is freely shared with others

Section 2: Gathering the Materials

Together, the four Nlaka’pamux communities and Scw’emx Child and Family have been actively gathering a variety of materials needed for this new framework. The process of creating this document has been informed by many different community voices old and young, including:

- Baskets of the Nicola Valley Conference
- Nlaka’pamux Elders Advisory Committee
- Community Meetings in each of the four communities
- Nlaka’pamux children’s artwork and reflections
- Nlaka’pamux Elders interview about nk’seytkn practices

Section 3: Core Strands

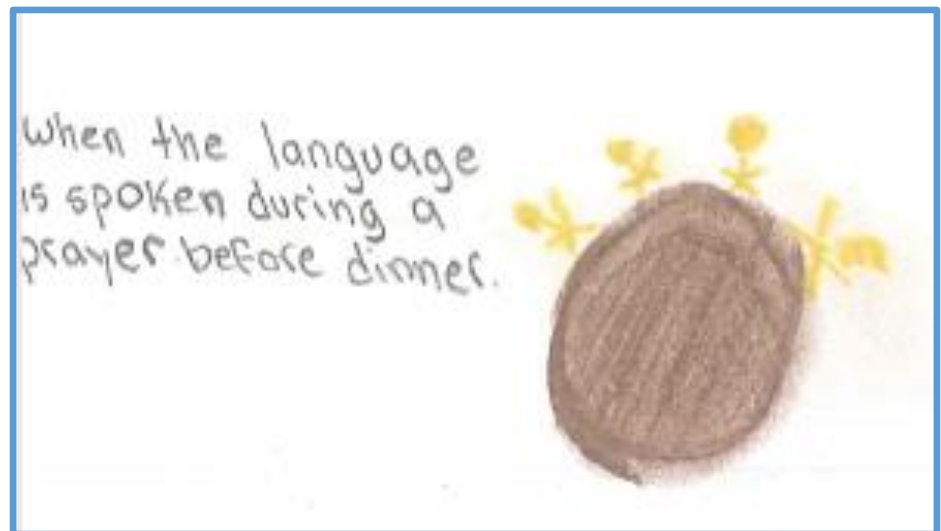
In making a cedar coil basket, the root is split into four strands in the middle and these become the inner coil. These four strands are at the core of the basket. Like these core strands, the baskets that hold our children rely for their strength on four core values:

1. Nk’seytkn
2. Language
3. Ceremony
4. Connection to the Land

This section shares the insights and themes that were heard from the children, from parents, guardians, and Elders in community meetings, and from the Elders Advisory Committee.

Section 4: Coiling our Nk'seytkn Baskets

This section suggests next steps for weaving the strands into how our families operate and how Scw'exmx Child and Family delivers services to Indigenous people in Nlaka'pamux communities. With the baskets of the Nlaka'pamux, each nk'seytkn has their own approach. Once we get the coils set right, the momentum of the basket will almost begin to coil itself. Each generation will support the next. As we weave Nlaka'pamux principles into our work with families, each coil will grow stronger and more integrated with the rest.



Section 5: Moving Forward

This document creates the foundations for a new way of doing child and family services. This section lists the important action steps that communities have identified to strengthen our families and keep our children safe. The next step is to actively collaborate on creating short and long range work plans.

- Determine how Scw'exmx Child and Family, communities, and partners will collaborate.
- Review actions identified in this framework (See *Actions to Strengthen Families*, pg. 40)
- Identify priority actions to focus on immediately.
- Develop short and long range work plans with timeline and accountabilities.

Section 1: What Are We Making?

Our communities live and breathe child and nk'seytkn services every day. A framework of practice develops a philosophy and guidelines for how this work is carried out. It is the protocol for how things are done. The Scw'exmx Child and Family Framework of Practice has been undertaken in order to lay a culturally-grounded foundation for how Scw'exmx Child and Family Services works with the four Nlaka'pamux communities.

This document is intended to:

- Support Nlaka'pamux communities to find their own answers to the question: What has to happen to keep our children at home with nk'seytkn?
- Guide the design of current and new nk'seytkn support programs.
- Set the mind frame and ethical orientation of the people who work with our children.
- Shape the kind of services that SCFSS provides.



Vision

Naŋip xʷuy ʔes zumstm he scmém'íʔt kt c'e xʷuy he zoŋʷzoŋʷt kʷukʷpiʔ

We will always look after our children for they will be strong leaders.

Naŋip kt xʷuy nŋeʔkepmxcinm ʔeks cunwns tek m he scmém'íʔt eŋ seytknmx.

We will talk the **Nlakapmux language** all the time so our children and people will know the language.

Xwuy cuntm he scmém'íʔt he he ciy us ks cewacúts he skikiyeʔ ʔeks zoŋʷzoŋʷt wiʔx kt kʷukʷpiʔ

We will tell the children the teachings of the ancestors so they will be strong leaders.

Xʷuy cuntem he scmém'íʔt he whén' ut pixm es cəwms te xʷaʔpit eŋ ʕ'wew'm.

We will tell the children where to hunt and how to fix their clothes and where to pick berries.

Naŋip ʔes key'nime he scmém'íʔt kəs kə cin.

We will always listen to the voices of the children.

Tuʔ hén nc'eʔtés u scmém'íʔt xʷuy xwəzstés ʔet ʔes zumínsc.

From the cradle to children, we will love and protect them.

Nŋeʔkepmx nkseytkn seʔ piyeʔ wiʔx.

Nlakapmux people should unite together as one.

Kʷúkʷpiʔ k'wen'scm he scmém'íʔt ʔet seytknmx.

Creator look after our children and our people.

Weaving the Framework for Our Families

Inspired by an approach that is rooted in indigeneity, this document outlines a framework of practice that is guided by the metaphor of making coiled cedar root baskets to hold our families safely together. Nlaka'pamux baskets are well known for their strength and beauty as well as their utility, being used for gathering food, holding water, and even for cooking. Our baskets are made from spirals of roots that are coiled together with such skill and love that they endure for generations. Rather than talk about building a framework for guiding the work with our families, community members felt it more fitting to use the metaphor of making baskets.

We think baskets are easy, but they are actually complex. Our baskets hold within them a worldview, a way of seeing things, a way of being. They are a Nlaka'pamux way of knowing. When we look carefully at baskets, they are remarkable. Each generation took great care in maintaining and adding to their unique style and techniques. Baskets are old knowledge. These

are not just baskets. They are intergenerational containers of knowledge and life and love.¹ Elder Amelia Washington grew up learning about baskets from her mother and grandmother and aunts who were great basket makers. Amelia has continued the tradition of basket making, sharing baskets and the protocols and ceremonies that go with them with her children and grandchildren. Her knowledge and insights about basket making, and the protocols and ceremonies that go with it, help to illustrate just how interwoven baskets are with Nlaka'pamux families.²

“You think it is simple, just making a basket, just coil it together, but there is so much more. Before we go into our sacred land, we prepare ourselves....

Each family has their own protocols and beliefs. There are seasons to be picking the roots as well as the colors. You must pick at the right season, at the right place, and you prepare it in certain ways as directed....

When you are doing a cedar coil baby basket, you have the root that has been split into four strands in the middle. These become the inner coil. These four coils represent the importance of family, language, ceremony, and connection to land. These core four values help frame the cradle. Then each of the coilings of the cedar root represents everything that the individual needs on this physical plane. We want the new person to be a strong individual rooted in the culture, rooted on the land, rooted in the language. We want them to have strong family values and beliefs and involvement with the ceremonial practices – right from babyhood to Elder.

Just like our baskets, this document gathers the strands that – when coiled together – create a structure that is strong enough to hold our children within it. Grounded in the philosophy of our baskets, this document identifies principles that are essential to how our communities care for our children.

In basket making, it is the four strands of the centre root that are at the core of the basket and keep it strong. Like these core strands, it is the four values of nk'seytkn , language, ceremony, and connection to the land that hold our children safe. The coiling together of these values is how our nk'seytkn structures work and hold strong.

¹ Basket image sourced from Lower Nicola Indian Band website: <http://lnib.net/history-and-culture/>

² The following excerpts are drawn from a larger conversation about baskets and Nlaka'pamux families. The full conversation appears in the Appendix: Our Baskets, Our Families, see page 46.

One of a Kind

³The word “framework” suggests straight lines, boundaries, and legalities. When they heard the word, community members felt that making a framework would be like boxing ourselves in. This led to a search for more appropriate ways of speaking about this new approach to child and nk’seytkn services. At the Nooaitch community meeting there was a discussion about Nlaka’pamux not being linear people. “How can we turn the framework into a circle?” community members asked. They talked about nature with its seasons and a time and place for everything. Instead of a framework, they suggested creating an approach based on circles and cycles.

This framework uses basket making as a metaphor for the weaving the framework. This document is rooted in place. The directions within this document come from the land, the waters, and the people. This protocol was not developed from a template – the approach outlined in this document has always been a part of the Nlaka’pamux – it just has not been written down before.



³ Basket image sourced from Lower Nicola Indian Band website: <http://lnib.net/history-and-culture/>

This document articulates longstanding Nlaka’pamux teachings as a means of moving towards a communal and ceremonial way of working with Indigenous people in Nlaka’pamux territory. In order to revitalize Nlaka’pamux families, we have to look at the teachings and what they mean. We must remember the sacred teachings of the Nlaka’pamux that come from the Creator and have been passed down through the generations and we must reinstitute them into the fabric of the community. We have to look at the belief system – the worldview – and explore what that means for working with our families.

The process of creating this document has involved discussions with Nlaka’pamux Elders, parents, guardians, and the children themselves. There has been long and careful reflection on the teachings and beliefs of the Nlaka’pamux. Baskets speak about how everything is connected – this is how it stays together. In the same way, this document weaves together diverse community voices from the little ones to the Elders and everyone in between.

Strategic Directions

There has been agreement among community members, the Elders Advisory Committee, and the Board of Scw’emx Child and Family about a number of guiding principles for the work of developing this document and the nature of the framework that it articulates.

Culture as the basis

This document – and the companion documents that go with it – have been developed from a place of culture and language revitalization. Culture is a way of life. The cultural work is not separate – it has to be infused throughout.

Respect difference

This is not about generalizing culture. Each nk’seytkn will be supported to keep with their own families’ culture. We can choose to take the best from different worlds. We can live with one foot in culture and one in mainstream society. Learn from both worlds but always remember where you come from. We have to be respectful of the fact that some people don’t do ceremony and rituals or practice culture. It’s about being able to coil around different families and their nk’seytkn cultures.

Proactive

Prevention and supports are key. Provide families with support and a safe hospitable environment where parents and guardians feel comfortable asking for help. This hospitality should happen as soon as people walk into the office. Our young families don’t ask for help: they are ashamed or too proud to ask for help. Take a strength-based holistic approach.

Recognize that traditionally in the past, families stepped up to offer help for those in need and didn't wait for them to ask.

Get buy in

It's important to share this with the younger generation so they take ownership and pride in it. People have to embrace it as their own. We have to market the framework to create education, awareness and buy in.

Evaluation

How will we test this approach? How do we ensure that our families benefit from it? We need to monitor outcomes over the years and find ways to determine whether we are becoming better parents and guardians, whether our communities are doing a better job of supporting our children and families.

Share with others

This work is available to be freely shared with other communities. It is not proprietary. The Elders Advisory Committee supporting this process has stressed that this work is intended to be shared and is freely available for use outside of Scw'exmx Child and Family and the four communities that have come together to develop it.

Living document

In life we are always recreating our systems. We need to be able to discuss, assess, and recreate this document. This document will be considered a living document and will be revisited regularly and revised as our nk'seytkn systems strengthen and grow over time.

Taking Stock

Scw'exmx Child and Family Services is intended to be a tool for the community – but there is a disconnect in the fact that social workers and nk'seytkn support workers learn the mainstream standards and code of ethics and norms of practice. We know from hard experience that a mainstream approach doesn't work for Nlaka'pamux. Instead, it increases isolation and contributes to cycles of poverty, displacement, and disconnection from each other.

We know that colonization changed how we are in ourselves – and how we interact with each other. Residential school and the Sixties Scoop took our families apart and disrupted the teaching of nk'seytkn roles and responsibilities. Today, many of our people struggle with a poor foundation of emotional health. Parenting skills are lacking due to intergenerational losses. There are respect and discipline issues with teenagers. Community members take treatment for alcohol and drug addictions, but when they return home there is a lack of follow up supports.

Our Elders point out that we have to take stock of where our families are at today. This includes recognizing where we are in terms of colonization and de-colonization. Our old ways taught us to be disciplined in our thinking and doing. Families today come from a different generation. Internal oppression has created shame and blame cycles. Our Elders have found that when they try to tell families how to parent, they are sometimes pushed aside. They point out that we need to re-introduce discipline to our people. This will be hard because it will require families to give up some of their colonized ways. Change starts at home. Families and communities need to take responsibility for rebuilding the care of our children and overcoming the colonization of our families. We need to create a safe environment where families feel comfortable asking for help. Parents and guardians need to turn off the TV and put devices away and talk to their children. We need to be the change we wish to see for our children and grandchildren.

“We are in transition. We want it, but we don’t. We have to change our ways and it can be hard to let go of things we enjoy. We have to show that we have something very unique that belongs to us but we have to get the people to embrace it. We have to give our grandchildren what belongs to them from their ancestors. It could be a gentle way to transition; if it’s done properly the child will want it. Don’t want to ruffle everyone up but gently ease into it. Change happens when you own it.”

– Victor York, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, February 23, 2108

This document seeks to acknowledge current challenges while supporting our vision of a different future. While the intergenerational traumas from our history have impacted us, we are the ones who can change this. This document is about re-embracing our communal responsibility to be accountable for each other.

Decolonize Methods of Social Work Practice

We want to decolonize the practice of our social workers. Mainstream capitalistic thinking considers some people as deserving of help but others – often those with addictions – to be undeserving. This perspective comes from individualizing the consequences of colonization and systemic, intergenerational oppression. It is reinforced by the systemic racism in mainstream ways of thinking that believed Indigenous people were incapable, and should be assimilated into the mainstream. We want to ensure that nk’seytkn workers in our communities are not applying a racist perspective. We want to ensure that they understand addiction from a trauma-based perspective and are not engaging in “blame the victim” biases.

This document provides a means of connecting the way of being of the people with the way child and nk'seytkn services are delivered. In this way, Nlaka'pamux principles can be applied to the work of supporting our children and families. Workers need to consider: When I go and meet with this nk'seytkn , how am I including Nlaka'pamux principles? How am I thinking from the perspective of the Nlaka'pamux values and teachings?

The framework is guided by the metaphor of the basket and by the Seven Sacred Values and the Transformational Principles outlined in Section 2. If we use these as the filter for our work with families, everything will shift. For workers, practicing in the way of the baskets means that work with Nlaka'pamux will be different. When workers approach from the perspective of the Seven Sacred Values and the Eight Transformational Principles, they will not be fitting our families into mainstream stereotypes. Instead of thinking about removing children, they will be thinking: How do we help these families to strengthen their baskets? How do we help them to tighten the design around their children? How do we apply the Seven Sacred Values here? How do we love and give warmth back to our children?

When they are working with a nk'seytkn , and they need to make a nk'seytkn plan, they can talk about the planning in terms of coiling a strong basket. Workers who practice this approach will be contributing to the revitalization and continuation of Nlaka'pamux ways.

Community-Driven Process

Since Scw'exmx Child and Family Services started, they have been thinking about what needs to change in how they support families and protect children. They have been doing that inquiry piece. And now they have the funding and the political will to do this work.

Now is the season and the time.

As Nlaka'pamux communities, we have talked for years about what we need to do. Together, Scw'exmx Child and Family and Nlaka'pamux communities have been actively identifying the pieces and gathering them up. This document can be seen as a list of materials and next steps for helping support families to build baskets that hold them together better.

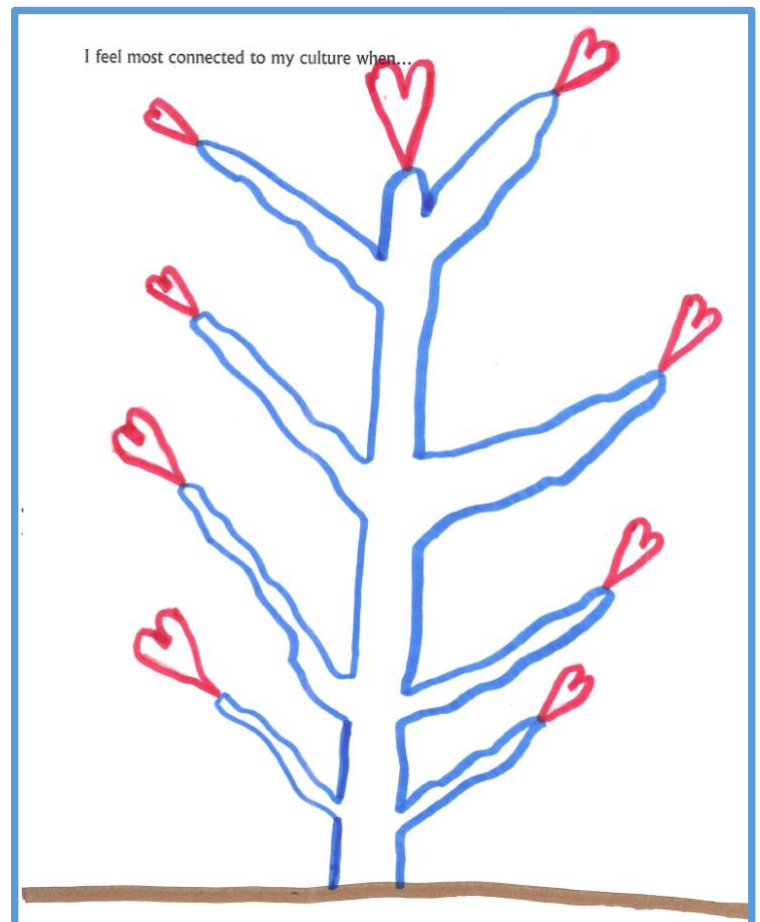
The new protocol for Scw'exmx Child and Family's work with Nlaka'pamux families requires input from everyone from the little ones to the Elders. This is like the care and thought and love that goes into creating baskets. Everything in the basket must be connected for it to stay together.

Scw'exmx Child and Family serves five communities that come from two different Nations and languages. This document was developed in discussion with four Nlaka'pamux communities: Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, and Shackan. Upper Nicola, the fifth band served by

Scw'exmx Child and Family, is Syilx and uses the framework for child and nk'seytkn services that has been developed by the Syilx Nation. For Upper Nicola families, Scw'exmx Child and Family will use the Syilx framework.

The process of creating this document has been informed by many different community voices.

- Baskets of the Nicola Valley – a conference celebrating Nlaka'pamux basket making was held on June 26 and 27, 2017 as a means of initiating community dialogue about developing a Nlaka'pamux framework of practice for Scw'exmx Child and Family. This included a presentation about the Transformative Principles at the core of Nlaka'pamux teachings and learnings.
- Nlaka'pamux Elders Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the four communities began meeting regularly in Fall 2017 in order to discuss the work and offer advice and direction in the development of this document.
- Open-door community meetings were held in the four Nlaka'pamux communities of Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, and Shackan in January 2018. Community members shared their thoughts about the framework and about what needs to be considered in developing care plans.
- Nlaka'pamux children were engaged in a discussion where they created visual art works that spoke about what makes them feel most loved.
- Elder interviews were conducted with more than a dozen Nlaka'pamux Elders to gather their experiences and insights around key questions related to raising children and keeping nk'seytkn systems strong.



Section 2: Gathering Materials

The process of developing this document and its companion documents has been like the process of gathering the materials to weave a new basket. Gathering in different places and in different seasons has each been required. Protocol and ceremony has been part of the process – as have discussions about the role of ceremony in our nk'seytkn systems. Different activities were required, as were the contributions of many different people. All of the input has been important, from the youngest to the oldest, from the past and the present.

This section brings together materials that has been gathered in a variety of ways and places, including:

- Further learnings about baskets and the Baskets of the Nicola Valley Conference held in June 2017
- Artwork by Nlaka'pamux children sharing their perspectives on love, culture, and happiness
- Principles of an Nlaka'pamux worldview as articulated in two different sets of values
- Insights from Nlaka'pamux stories

Learning About Baskets

Baskets of the Nicola Valley Conference

A conference celebrating and revisiting Nlaka'pamux basket making traditions was held in Merritt on June 26 and 27, 2017. The gathering was a foundational event to begin the dialogue between Scw'exmx Child and Family and community towards developing this framework of practice based on Nlaka'pamux values and beliefs. Community members were able to showcase their nk'seytkn baskets and share their stories about basket making in their families. The conference was an important cultural learning and knowledge sharing opportunity that included the chance to learn to basket making skills. This included demonstrations of weaving both cedar root and pine needle baskets. There was a keynote presentation by Dr. Marie Anderson, a

Hosted by: Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society

Nlaka'pamux scholar who shared learnings from her recently completed PhD. At this event, a discussion was begun around what Scw'exmx Child and Family needs to offer for children, youth, and their families in order to ensure healthy development.

Every Basket is a Process

People think baskets are easy when actually they are an intricate, involved process. First, you learn about the baskets. You learn from the people in your nk'seytkn . You are taught about the history of the baskets and what your nk'seytkn has done over and over through the generations. You learn that you need a particular kind of root. You learn where to go. You learn the right time of year to gather. You are taught: This is where our nk'seytkn goes and this is when we go. You learn how to respect the plants. You learn the protocols and ceremonies.

You come to understand the process. Get the materials here – don't go there. Go in this season; this is when our nk'seytkn goes. In this way, you also learn where your nk'seytkn family) has been. You visit places where the generations before you have been. You learn to give thanks for the materials that they have left for you. You learn to gather carefully. Roots can break. You don't want to kill the tree. You learn to give thanks. You learn to only take what you need.

Every basket is a learning process. At the beginning you are always reflecting. Assessing. Does the basket need to be bigger? Sturdier? What am I using it for? You are making sure you have the right stuff. Gathering all your materials takes quite a bit of work. With cedar root, you need to think about when and where to get it. Dig them like this. Soak them for this long. There are multiple layers of preparation.

Then comes a time when you are ready to bring all the materials to your work space and start the process of putting them together. This is when you learn that the beginning can be the hardest. You will learn by doing. By working side by side with others. Once you get the coils set right, the momentum of the basket will almost begin to coil itself.

Listen to the Children

The importance of including the voices of children came up repeatedly in community discussions. Children need a voice. They need a safe place to say what their needs are. They need an environment where they feel safe to express their needs and fears. This is essential for all children – and especially for those navigating unsettled home and nk'seytkn environments.

In order to ensure that the children's voices contributed to the development of this document, two dozen Nlaka'pamux children ranging from teenagers to pre-schoolers were asked to reflect on several questions and then write and draw about their feelings.

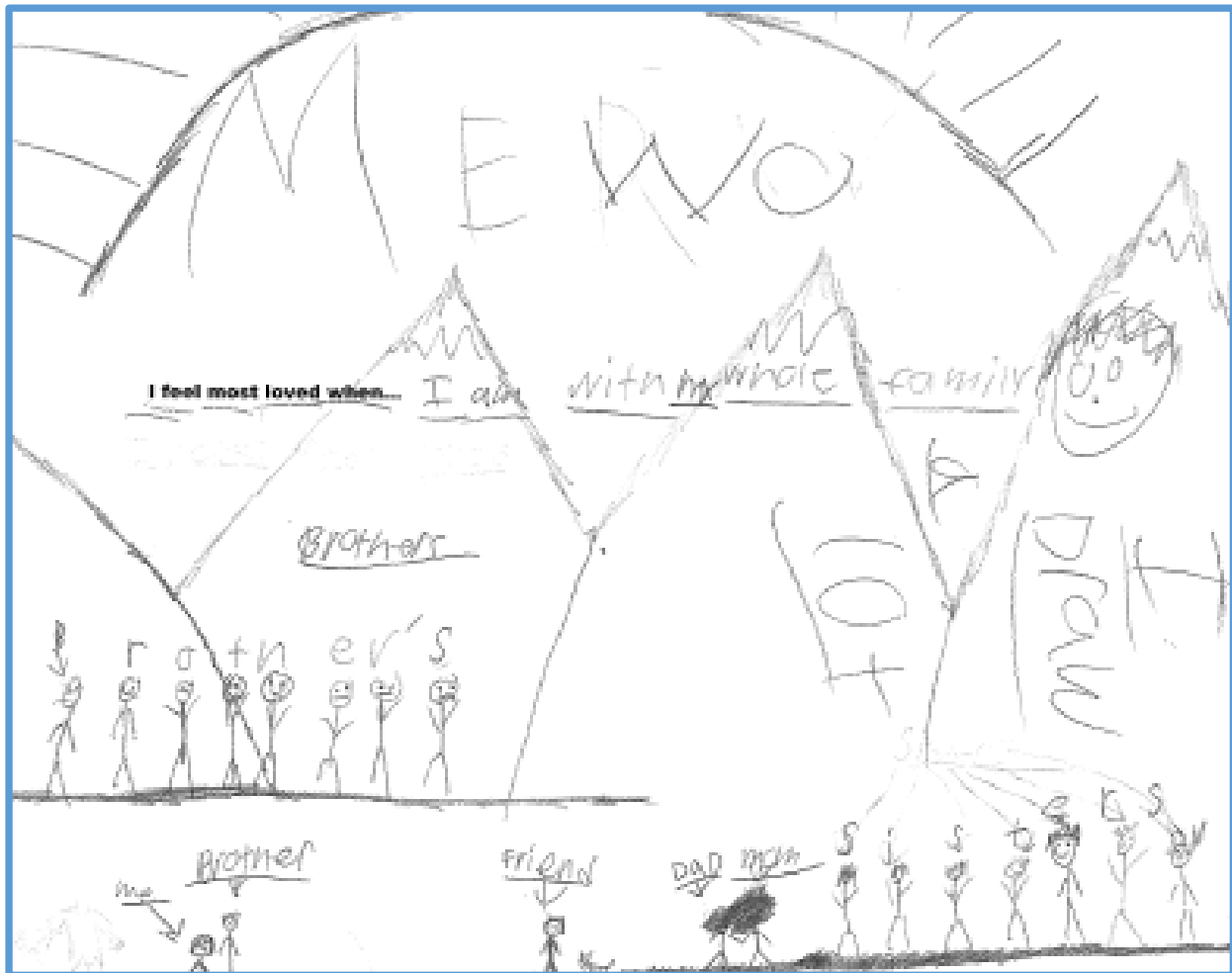
The children were asked to answer one of the following questions:

- What makes them feel the most loved?
- What makes them feel connected to their culture?
- What makes them feel happy?

The children’s responses, and the pictures that they drew, speak volumes about the core elements that unite our families: land, culture, and spending time together.

The theme that came up the most from the children was being on the land and spending time together there as a nk’seytkn – children celebrated their experiences camping with nk’seytkn , going for a walk with their cousins, swimming with their parents, and berry picking. Another strong theme was engagement with culture – whether it was doing a sweat, drumming in the bush, or dancing pow wow.

Artwork and quotes from the children appear throughout this document to reinforce the importance of children’s voices and to ensure their perspectives inform the outcomes.



A Nlaka’pamux Worldview

Throughout the gathering process, there were two specific collections of values and principles that were discussed and identified as being important. These principles guide relationships with ourselves, with others, with spirit, and with the land. These principles are a way of belief – a way of thinking. They are a cultural way of self-discovery – a way of living and being. Together, these values and principles constitute a worldview – a Nlaka’pamux worldview that will guide the journey home and bring our families back to us. If you weave these principles through everything we do, transformations will occur.

The question of how we activate these principles has informed the development of this document and will continue to guide the ongoing work of strengthening our families.

Seven Sacred Values

There are sacred values that have been generally discussed and espoused by North American Indigenous Peoples. The number one value over all is love. Nlaka’pamux community members and Elders stressed the importance of including these values as part of the philosophical grounding of this document.

We need to return to teaching these to our families – parents, guardians, and children can benefit from re-learning these essential values.

1. Love: Eagle
2. Respect: Buffalo
3. Truth: Turtle
4. Honesty: Sasquatch
5. Humility: Wolf
6. Courage: Bear
7. Wisdom: Owl

Note that the animals assigned to a value are interchangeable dependent on the location and are used here as examples. There are songs and stories from all over North America that relate to these animals and these values. Song is incredibly powerful for Nlaka’pamux.

Transformative Principles

At the Baskets of the Nicola Valley Conference, community members appreciated the presentation by Dr. Marie Anderson on her doctoral thesis – particularly the eight principles of transformation that she identifies as being at the core of Nlaka’pamux Teachings and Learnings.⁴

⁴ See “Chapter Six: Caustem (Using) Nlaka’pamux Teachings and Learnings” in *Nlaka’pamux Grandmothers’ Traditional Teachings and Learnings*, Beatrice Marie Anderson, PhD Thesis, UBC, Dec 2011.

Like the Seven Sacred Values, these eight principles were identified as being a grounding element to be included in the philosophical coils that serves as the baseline for our new approach.

The following section provides a short summary of each principle augmented by a short quote pulled from Dr. Anderson's thesis. Two spellings are provided for each of the principles – the first is the Nlaka'pamux spelling and the second is the phonetic version used by Dr. Anderson in her thesis.

1. *Tekm snuk'we?* (Takemshnooqua)

Knowing we are connected: land, animals, plants, and people

We are related to all of creation. This is inherent in Nlaka'pamux knowledge. We are part of an intrinsic whole. We need each other to survive and thrive. This knowledge links us to the cosmos and to each other. These relationships – both seen and unseen – are respected by living in harmony with the Earth Mother. In our relationships with the land, animals, and plants, this includes practices such as harvesting with permission, practicing gratitude and reverence, taking only what is needed, and using everything that can be used. In our relationships with people, community members are treated with love, sharing, and caring.

“When we say *takemshnooqua*, we are remembering all our relatives: human, non-human, current, and ancestral – calling on them all during every waking moment and in prayers.”⁵

2. *Ce?c?éx'wsc* (Chaachaawoowh)

Celebrating people and land joyously

This Nlaka'pamux concept describes the happiness felt by being wholly present, using all our senses, and being joyous in the moment. It teaches us to recognize that each day brings a new beginning. We are thankful and greet the new day just as we also greet a new nk'seytkn member, a visiting nk'seytkn, or the arrival of fresh food. As a tribal people, *ce?c?éx'wsc* means that belonging to a collective is reassuring, important, and joyful for us. We rejoice in one another's presence and create joyful occasions to be with others. One example of this is our Naming Ceremonies.

“*Chaachawoowh* is to be joyful in the knowledge that we are alive, that we belong, and that we can learn.”⁶

⁵ Marie Anderson, p. 107.

⁶ Marie Anderson, p. 108.

3. *Xəkpstes* (Huckpestes)

Developing life-long learning and wisdom

Learning from our experiences is a life-long process where many self-discoveries are possible. Storytelling is a traditional means to guide the growth and development of children within their Nlaka’pamux community. Discoveries or awareness occurs through reflection. The development of wisdom is the accumulation of a lifetime of lived experiences where one reflects critically upon them. We display wisdom when we learn from and do not repeat self-defeating behaviours. We never cease learning, and we never cease transmitting knowledge to our families and community.

“The oral practice of *huckpestes* develops wisdom through intergenerational learning and storytelling and reflection, beginning with the Nlaka’pamux child and extends outward to Nlaka’pamux family, extended family and community.”⁷

4. *Xʷəstxʷ* (Huztowaahh)

Giving lovingly to family and community

This concept teaches us not to bear ill will towards nk’seytkn or community. It encourages us to show respect and develop close relationships with community members, treating them as part of our extended family. Children are precious gifts to be loved unconditionally by everyone in the community. Extended family helps to raise the children. Children are also encouraged to share and care for others. Traditionally, everyone in the village supported one another with their daily needs. In contemporary times, this can be practiced as unconditional acceptance and non-judgement.

“The concept of *huztowaahh* describes the practice of loving the extended family as well as the collective community to which one belongs.”⁸

5. *Cunwns* (Choonwensh)

Succeeding in endeavors

Cunwns synthesizes all of the practices for holistic development – spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental. It is essential to success – whether as an individual, a nk’seytkn, or a community. All of the developmental stages require teachings. Much Nlaka’pamux knowledge is passed on through family and community interactions during storytelling and in everyday living. By

⁷ Marie Anderson, p. 112.

⁸ Marie Anderson, p. 113.

including children in nk'seytkn activities, they learn by observation and participation. We reach success when we are able to replicate the actions of the extended nk'seytkn love of long ago with lifelong learning and connections to people and land.

“The Nlaka’pamux concept of *choonwensh* focuses on creating conditions for successful learning.”⁹

6. *Cewacuts* (Choowaachoots)

Utilizing Nlaka’pamux vision-seeking methods

Many ceremonies and stories celebrated the stages of life. Ceremonies were a means of sharing wealth and resources. The ancient practices for puberty prepared youth to pursue a vision of a good life for their future nk'seytkn . Life purpose was often revealed through a vision quest with spirit helpers from plants or animals. Storytelling within families was closely connected to vision-seeking. *Cewacuts* was often experienced as part of growing up in the extend nk'seytkn , through daily activities, and hearing stories. Grandparents played a mentor role in guiding the younger generations to recognize their adult roles and responsibilities.

“*Choowaachoots* speaks to the principle of ascertaining one’s purpose in life by being mentored by Grandmothers and family members; training for it; and using ceremonial and spiritual practices.”¹⁰

7. *Nmimf q'inút* (Nmeenlth coynchoots)

Incorporating Nlaka’pamux knowledge

Teachings received in childhood were embedded in our physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental realms through learning relationships with Grandparents. Intergenerational learning taught protocols or appropriate behaviors, encouraged kindness and respect, and shared knowledge about resources and how to use them.

“They [Grandmothers] had a story for each of the learnings we required in life’s journey such as expectations and responsibilities for living a healthy life, caring for family and others, being generous and sharing our resources, and passing on these learnings to children and others.”¹¹

⁹ Marie Anderson, p. 115.

¹⁰ Marie Anderson, p. 117.

¹¹ Marie Anderson, p. 122.

8. *Ptinusm* (Peteenuushem)

Reflecting on learning and relearning lifelong lessons

Ptinusm is important as a means to contextualize the incorporation of Nlaka'pamux knowledge, the *nmimt q^winút*.

“In our Nlaka'pamux way, *peteenuushem* must not be rushed, as it requires much reflection, repetition, and introspection. Rushing this process may produce short-sighted goals and create conflict among people involved in the process.”¹²



NLAKA'PAMUX TRANSFORMATIVE PRINCIPLES¹³

¹² Marie Anderson, p. 126.

¹³ This diagram is from Marie Anderson's thesis, p. 105.

Learn from the Stories

Within the baskets there is a sense of belonging that reaches many years into the past and many years into the future. At the Baskets Conference, a number of Nlaka’pamux storytellers shared the Nlaka’pamux creation stories. These stories are oral and are intended to be shared orally with the movements and intonations of the storyteller shifting with the person, the context, and the reasons for sharing the stories. At the Conference, stories were shared by Robin Humphrey, Tim Manuel, and Margo Manuel.

During the conference, there was a discussion among those in attendance about what messages these stories have that can be applied to the development of this new framework. Following are main themes from the questions that served as springboards for dialogue.

What does it mean for how we work with families?

- Take care of children in a good way: this includes teaching protocols for listening, respecting self and others, learning to get along, being with people.
- Structure is important for children.
- Help children to be aware of their actions and what the consequences can be.
- Help children identify their priorities.
- Be patient with children, honor their milestones.
- Help facilitate more communication within the nk’seytkn.
- Be open minded – everyone has a story. Accept of what is being shared.
- Don’t be afraid to show emotion.

What are the lessons from this story?

- The thoughts and voices of the children should be heard.
- Have fun with children. Nurture their spirits. Be happy with them.
- Learn from mistakes and don’t give up. Teach children that we can’t always win and that we can take the lessons and learn from our mistakes. Teach persistence.
- Ask the Creator for help. Creator loves us enough to forgive and provide more opportunities.
- Be disciplined.
- Be accountable.

How can we use those lessons in our programs?

- Include more culture in programs and use traditional ways.
- Educate workers so they are more knowledgeable about Nlaka’pamux culture and stories. Make things. Do cultural activities.

- Get off screens. Slow down. Be in nature.
- Get mentors to teach youth life lessons: How to prepare food, medicines. How to be a good person. Teachings will get stronger as they are repeated. Teach survival skills by age 10 to 11.
- Have more nk'seytkn functions. Create larger webs of support for children. This will mean that there are backups when primary caregivers can't look after them.



Section 3: Core Strands

The work that informs this document has been going on for time immemorial. In the past few years, the four Nlaka'pamux communities have been actively gathering the materials for this document. Metaphorically speaking, we have been doing the careful work of following cedar roots in sandy soil. We have been sitting and peeling bark and telling each other stories. Some of that work, as outlined in Section 2, was undertaken specifically for this project of writing down the perspectives and protocols that will shape the way that Scw'exmx Child and Family delivers services. Many of the same themes and ideas came up in each of the communities – and also in the discussions of the Elders Advisory Committee. The children's art also echoed these main themes.

In making a cedar coil basket, the root is split into four strands in the middle and these become the inner coil. These four strands of the centre root are at the core of the basket. The coiling of these values is how our nk'seytkn structures work and hold together. Like these core strands, the baskets that hold our children rely for their strength on four core values:

- **Nk'seytkn**
- **Language**
- **Ceremony**
- **Connection to the Land**

This section shares the insights and themes that were heard from the children, from parents, guardians, and Elders in community meetings, and from the Elders Advisory Committee. The following statements are summaries of the discussions that took place, including some direct quotes from community members and Elders.



Nk'seytkn

Our people are not nuclear families. We are community-based people. Families don't have to be blood. We are all related. We are Nlaka'pamux. The child belongs to our community.

"It's up to the community members to tell our young moms and parents.

'When we talk like this and speak the truth, it's because we care.'"

– Bernice Garcia, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, February 23, 2018

Meet Families Where They Are

Families are at different levels of health and wellness. Recognize the strengths in families and communities. Empower them. Strengthen nk'seytkn processes. What are the nk'seytkn practices? Culture is specific to families. Acknowledge and work with this.

It Takes a Community

Communities need to practice connectedness. Culture is community focused. We need to get back to that. We are individualistic now and trying to come back to a community perspective. It's difficult when you are raised to be an individual. This change is where the tension is. There is a lot of indifference in the communities. No one is paying attention to each other. When a teenager is not going to school, the school does not follow up. Children fall through the cracks. There is a lot of suicide.

A community needs to come together when families are struggling. When families want to help raise a child, we need to supply them with what they need. As a community, we need to provide that support. We can identify our resource people for communal roles and responsibilities. Elders are role models. It is a natural process and members tend to take on certain roles like hunter or healer or carver. Traditional roles need to be reviewed.

Action:

- *Compile a master list of nk'seytkn and community roles and responsibilities*

"Community members need to take more accountability.

We need to sit down with our children and families. It can't all be on the agency.

We need to do this ourselves and provide the emotional, mental, spiritual support.

We have to take back that responsibility. We can take it back.

Step up and do something. Our children are our future."

– Kowaintco Michel, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, February 23, 2018

Everyone is Responsible

In Nlaka'pamux nk'seytkn structure, everyone is related so the children are everyone's responsibility. Do genealogy work. Make sure the children know who their nk'seytkn is. Pass on the history of connection. Aunts and uncle need to be more involved so grandparents are not overburdened. Some families have traditional adoptions and are closely related by adoption. Need to know who families are and how they are all connected. The history is important. Each nk'seytkn has their own law: Who is the head of the nk'seytkn ? Identify them.

Support the Children

We need to use early childhood education programs to reach children at kindergarten and younger and build a foundation for emotional health. On the island, they teach the children the language and culture every day. They say the prayers in the morning in the language, and then they go to school. Sports help teach discipline; team sports are good.

Support all Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians need a lot of help. Parents and guardians are out there struggling – whether with addictions or being single parents or health problems. They need supports. If they were foster caregivers they would be provided with daycare, respite, medical coverage, and other supports, but parents don't get these. This needs to change. It doesn't make sense to wait and provide these supports only once the nk'seytkn has been worn down by stress and then traumatized by removing the children. Parents and guardians struggle with managing technology safely including phones, games, and access to things like drugs, sex trade, pornography, and cyber bullying. Single parents also require support.

Every community needs good childcare with trained staff, especially for families that are struggling so they can make positive changes in their lives. Include supports for nk'seytkn healing: There is a need for long term healing work for families – including healing from Indian residential school.

*“More supports for our parents and more parenting workshops.
Keeping them involved in all the decisions that the agency is
making for their children. Parents lose faith and get disconnected.
One mom gave up. Felt she was not fit mother.
Stopped trying she felt so bad about herself and her addictions.”*

–Kowaintco Michel, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, February 23, 2018

Support Grandparents

A lot of grandparents are looking after their grandchildren and they need help too. Grandparents don't get financial support for caring for their grandchildren if they're not

apprehended. It is expensive. They don't get the funding to support the children to do different activities. There is also a gap in rights for grandparents. It can be difficult for them to have visits and get information when grandchildren are apprehended.

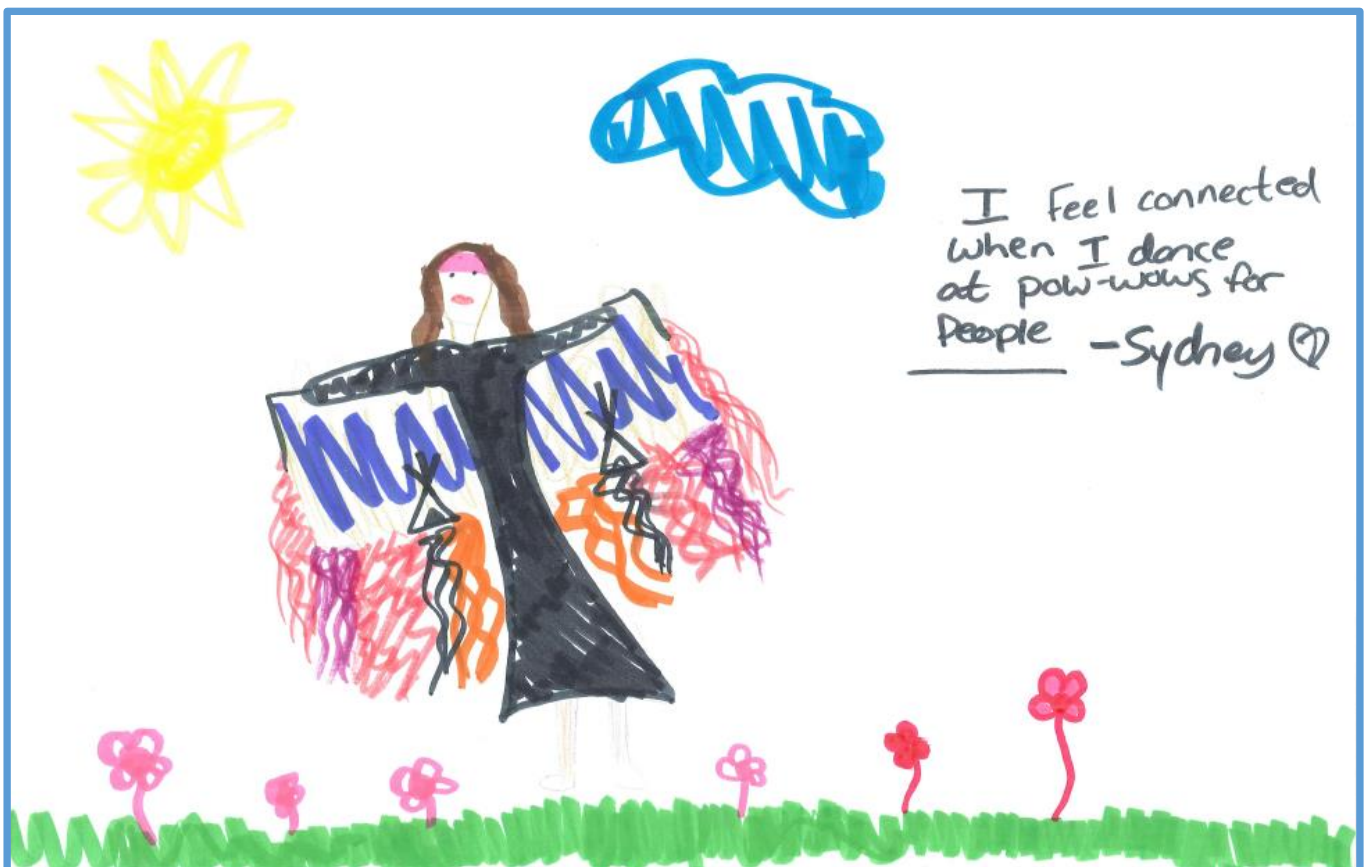
Ceremony

Teach the Children

Our culture and heritage should start with our families. We have a responsibility to pass on knowledge about culture even if the parents or guardians are not willing, others are. We all have a responsibility. Culture is a lot of discipline. It should start at a young age. We need to give the children a strong cultural foundation with language and song. Teach them who they are in the big picture.

Ceremony

We are gaining our power through our ceremony. Traditional names are important. It identifies who they are. Puberty ceremonies are so important to teach values and it makes a difference. They need to be brought back. Leadership is talking about bringing back ceremony. Workers should get brushed off and start getting them involved in ceremonies – not just the newborn



ceremony. Hold ceremony to acknowledge the responsibility that people are taking on when they care for the children of others.

Include Elders

Elders need to be sharing their knowledge. Some elders are shy. They have been shamed. The more the elders share, the more they will feel comfortable sharing that knowledge. Community elders also need to prove confidentiality. They need to show the community that they are trustworthy and they can be there.

Include all Nlaka’pamux Children in Care

It is important that ceremonial practice happens for children in care. An important opportunity for ceremony is when children in care are being returned to the community. When this happens, there should be a welcoming ceremony for them like the one that happens when newborn babies are introduced to the extended family and community.¹⁴ The agency would hand over responsibility to the community support people and then the aunts and uncles can step forward and introduce themselves to the children and make a public statement about how they will take them under their wing and teach them. Wherever Nlaka’pamux children are in care, they should be included.

Respect Difference

Be sensitive to people having other faiths and beliefs.

“When we bring back our culture, we own it. It belongs in our veins.”

– Victor York, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, February 23, 2018

Language

Teach the Language

Language and culture are the foundations for this work. They are a source of identity and strength and there is a real desire for them.

When it comes to our children, we have to use our language. Language is so scarce in the community. We need to be responsible for retaining it. Language is important.

BC-based research by Dr. Michael Chandler and Dr. Chris Lalonde on the mental health of Indigenous youth shows that youth who speak their language have a lower risk of mental illness. These studies show that cultural practices insulate our youth from self-injury and suicide. Youth suicide rates are dramatically lower in communities that have taken active steps

¹⁴ This is described in Section 1 by Amelia Washington – see page 10.

to preserve and rehabilitate their language and culture.¹⁵ In the communities that spoke their language, the suicide rate was almost zero compared to communities that had no language. It has to do with identity and healing.

Action: *Learn how to introduce yourself in the language. Encourage others to introduce themselves in the language also.*

“Language will help us find ourselves again.”

— Participant at Lower Nicola Community Meeting, January 11, 2018

Connection to the Land

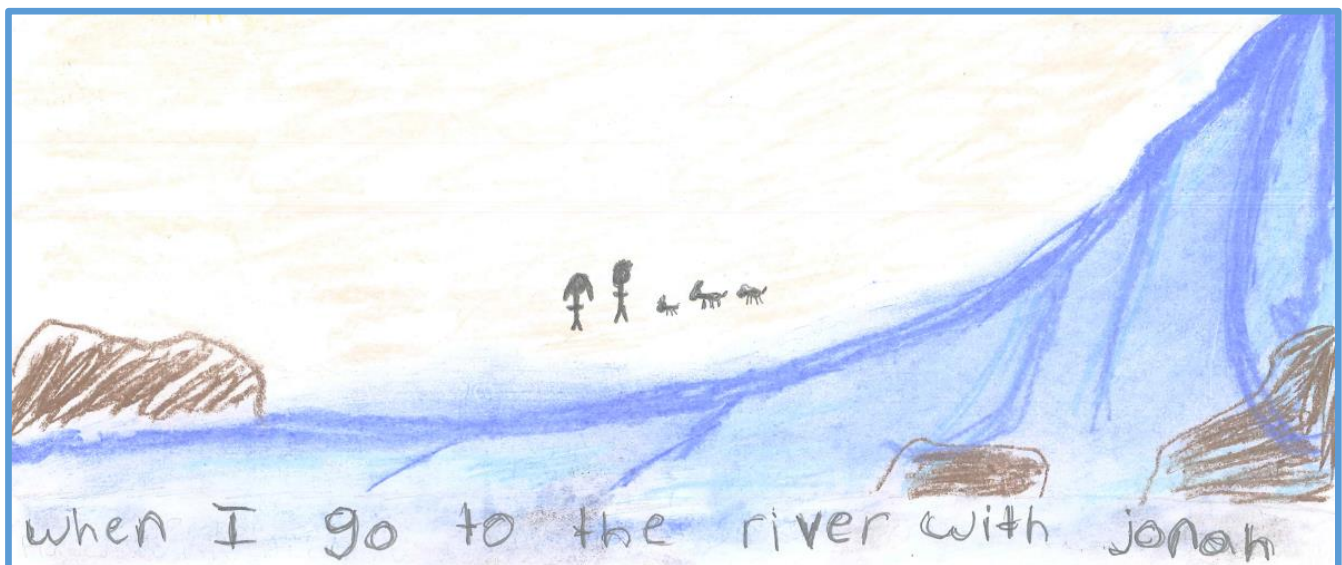
On the land

Our land is alive. Being outside and being on the land is good medicine. Relationship to all living things is so important.

It’s important to bring the children out on the land and share teachings. It’s a way of life. Go camping – one participant had spent several weeks camping with extended nk’seytkn . Identify the hunters in the community. We need to recognize them. Get them to teach the children. Teach the value of respect for environment and ecology.

“We need to connect their roots to the land.”

—Participant at Nooaitch Community Meeting, January 9, 2018



¹⁵ Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C.E. (2008). Cultural continuity as a moderator of suicide risk among Canada’s First Nations. In Kirmayer, L. & Valaskakis, G. (Eds.). *Healing traditions: The mental health of Aboriginal peoples in Canada* (pp 221-248). University of British Columbia Press.

Section 4: Coiling Our Nk'seytkn Baskets

This work is about how Nlaka'pamux families look after one another. Right now, the services that Scw'exmx Child and Family provide are needed. But the vision for the future is that we will reduce our need for professional services. Many things are needed to reach this vision. Prevention is a major part of it – getting support to families *before* they collapse instead of after. Another part is re-energizing our extended nk'seytkn systems, listening to the Elders, and taking responsibility for what we can each contribute.

This section begins the work of identifying core actions that our Nlaka'pamux communities want to make happen – both within our communities and within Scw'exmx Child and Family.

Community engagement is an important next step in moving this section forward. The questions need to be put to community:

- How do we want to activate the principles and perspectives shared in this document?
- Do we want to have youth workshops based on these principles to teach the young people a cultural way of self-discovery and living?
- If I am a social worker, how do I weave these principles through everything I do?
- If I am the band manager, how do I weave these into my work?
- If I am doing family support work?

Community Actions

Parenting Academy

Our parents don't know how to be parents. We need to teach them and, in the process, teach the children too. Teach the future mothers how to be good parents and the next generation will be much stronger.

Action:

- *Establish a Parenting Academy. Teach parents and guardians with focus on patience and coping skills. Recommend looking at Judy Green Metis Society – they have good templates for parenting programs. Keep it open to everyone. Teach financial skills to get by – parents and guardians struggle with this and it creates conflict.*
- *Create resources for teaching nk'seytkn routines and supporting children's health.*
- *Create a Parents Handbook featuring the insights and experiences of Nlaka'pamux Elders.*

Nk'seytkn Transition Home

Community members talked a lot about a safe home in each community for children and families. There was strong interest in having a safe house on each reserve where families could

come when they needed to work things out. One community has a transition house for women and the idea came up repeatedly to create a similar house for families. It could be used as a place for parents and guardians to learn skills and connect with Elders for support. It could be where social workers bring children temporarily for safety until someone steps forward to care for them in community. There would be people there who are trained – ideally our own band members need to be trained to look after our children. It would be a place where families can learn and heal together.

Grandmothers' Group

Create a Grandmothers' Circle or an Auntie's Circle to share support and give advice. The circle would keep aware of what is happening in the community. They could be involved in helping hold community circles to plan for the children. The group could fulfill the role of extended nk'seytkn for children who don't have involvement from their own families. Young people could go to the group when they need help and the group could help advocate with the agency. The group would bring together different skill sets in support a healthy community.

Action: Make the Community Circle a program with a budget and shared decision making.

Cultural Space

We need a home on the reserve where Elders can teach the language and tell stories. Create an environment that has the teachings. This is how we are going to make things right. Have a place in the community where children, parents, and guardians can go to learn cultural values. Culture teaches all the values of life: land, water, nk'seytkn teachings. Children can learn the nk'seytkn and spiritual values right in the community. Ideally would place the children in homes that are close to the cultural place. It could include services in the building. Get the band workers involved, including social workers, health workers, and education coordinators.

Connect Families with Culture

Action:

- *Provide transportation to functions. Support parents and guardians to get their children to the programs and services. Let's get the children there so they can get to know their community.*
- *Compile a list of medicine people and Elders who can work with families. Showcase our own local knowledge keepers.*

Agency Actions

“Make it about people, not programs or services.
Collaboration and integration. Not in isolation.
None of our organizations succeed appropriately
because we work in silos. Need to set goals.

The targets have to be reduction in professional service providers...”

– Lorraine Moses, Elders Advisory Committee Meeting, March 5, 2018

Make it clear that the community has the ability to keep children in the community. It needs to be clear that the families within the community holds the power, not the agency.

Collaborate

In terms of the relationship building it is critical that all of our organizations function seamlessly together. Collaboration is starting but the boards need to sit together. They need to interact at the government levels. Agency and community must communicate in a better way. We need unity. Work together on projects and funding and communicating on our children and services so they are more like a team.

The key is to work together. Stop functioning in silos. We divide responsibility into tiny slivers. People in those slivers don't talk to each other. We need to promote communication. When we are looking at designing prevention and keeping children in care in our communities, this involves a myriad of program areas: housing, social, economic, health, justice. SCFSS can't do it all. Housing shortages are severe. Every band is short on houses. We need to strengthen the linkages.

Action:

- *Have information days where all the agencies come together.*
- *Bands should work with Housing Commission to improve housing on reserves.*
- *Families need adequate housing (space) to look after their children.*

Social Workers

Agencies need to be visible in the community. If you work with our children, you need to be seen by our people. Families need to see workers in good times. Social workers need to know the people involved. There should be a social worker on every reserve. There needs to be more connection to the nk'seytkn home to get to the root of the problems. Take stock of where people are at holistically. Increase opportunities to take preventative action including a larger role for nk'seytkn support workers. People don't want to show a social worker that they are struggling, but if the nk'seytkn support worker goes into the home with the social worker, the

parents and guardians are more open. They should do more house visits. Assess home, ask parents what the nk'seytkn needs. Help families meet their needs. Talk to the families that are raising the children – sometimes this is grandparents and other extended nk'seytkn .

Training: Give social workers a test before they can work with our people. They should ask themselves: Am I respecting the Nlaka'pamux values of this child and nk'seytkn? Am I being humble? Respectful? Social workers should exercise the Seven Sacred Values. We need more Nlaka'pamux social workers. The ones that are not Nlaka'pamux should be sensitive and trained for our culture. Scw'exmx Child and Family social workers should go to the colleges and teach future social workers about this document and about working with Nlaka'pamux. Ensure that there is proper orientation, training, and support for all staff.

Action:

- *Social workers must have mandatory cultural sensitivity training.*
- *This document needs to go to delegation training.*
- *Incorporate this document and its teachings into NVIT social work program.*
- *Have language classes for their workers so they are familiar with the language.*
- *Introduce staff to the community to show that they are trained and appropriate.*
- *Develop a Nlaka'pamux orientation and training for staff.*

Apprehension

The structure of how apprehension happens needs to be looked at. Change that process. Put system and supports in place so that it never happens that child gets apprehended at 3 am with Chief and Council in disarray and no one able to contact extended nk'seytkn .

Action:

- *Instead of apprehension, have the Elders work with the nk'seytkn first. Develop a women's circle or a Grandmothers Circle that is aware of what is happening in the community and can take steps to address situations before they explode.*

Community Caregivers

The dream is not to have foster care. Create community-based caregiver homes with good values, non-judgmental, accepting, and connected with the community. Look after children in care just the way we would take care of our own children.

Extended nk'seytkn and community members have to look at the responsibilities of bringing children into their home. They need to make space for them, share space with them. Has the nk'seytkn discussed this? How will this affect their spouse? There should be a checklist of things that people need to consider to make it work. It is stressful and can cause discord in families.

Years ago, no one got paid for caring for extra children. You looked after them with no funding. But now the truth is that some people raise other children for a living. You can't romanticize this, money is a reality today. It is about employment and money. The important part is that whether they are doing it well. One approach is to measure the quality of care like they do for a group home.

Action:

- *Splatsin designed their own system of care where Band Council becomes the legal guardians. Consider whether Nlaka'pamux bands want to do the same thing.*
- *Social workers to develop list of considerations that apply when community members take on extra children.*
- *Revise the caregiver approval process. Look at current caregiver home checklists. Scw'exmx Child and Family has asked the Elders Advisory to review the checklist that Scw'exmx Child and Family currently follows. It is invasive and takes several months to get approval. There are various custom care programs out there that use different screening and funding methods.*
- *Caregiver placements with nk'seytkn members should provide the same supports and funding as foster parents outside of the nk'seytkn.*
- *Create a Handbook for Caregivers.*
- *Each community to have a children's home with trained people where the children can go when they need to.*

Non-Community Caregivers

Foster families should get involved with the community. Support the children learning their identity, language, disciplines. Maintain connection to nk'seytkn . The children should be part of community functions and camps. Make sure children visit their families more often.

Children should be kept informed about events in their families. And extended families should be kept informed about their children in care.

Action:

- *Create a Handbook for Foster Parents.*
- *Provide mental health supports – psychologist visits – for children who are moved around.*
- *MOU agreement – recommend that Scw'exmx Child and Family implement a clause that when children move into another territory, they have a service agreement with other agency.*

Transitioning to Adulthood

Make sure there is a couple of years of planning before youth age out. Make it a practice to start at 15 or 16 to develop their independence skills; but also recognize that this is a life process and 15 or 16 does not work for everyone – some people are 30 and still not grown up. Teach budgeting, goal setting. Connect them with resources within the band so they know what is available to them. Also develop the connections to their families. They should be connected to their nk'seytkn all along.

Team up with other agencies to look at how to better support transitioning youth. There is a mandatory age, but when is the child actually mature enough to be on their own? For some it could be 18, but there are a lot of adult children still living with their parents or guardians. Provide additional support up to age 27. There needs to be a division in Scw'exmx Child and Family that is specifically there for teaching our children how to take care of themselves so they are ready for transitioning into adulthood. This could be nk'seytkn navigator and advocate for life skill programs and life skill planning for young families.

Action:

- *Talk to children who have aged out – get their input.*
- *There are resources available as a result of Jordan's Principle – improve access to additional resources following aging out.*
- *Provide additional supports up to age 27.*
- *Create a division in Scw'exmx Child and Family that provides the teachings and supports for transition into adulthood.*



Section 5: Moving Forward

Strengthen Families

With **Nam ʔes zúminstm**, the Nlakaʔamux communities of Coldwater Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, Nooaitch Indian Band, and Shackan Indian Band have created the foundations for a new way of doing child and family services.

A long term vision of nkʔeytkn wellness has been identified and Nlakaʔamux guiding principles and teachings have been compiled to direct the hard work that lies ahead. Through multiple engagement activities, the four communities have shared many important action steps that, together, will strengthen our families and keep our children safe.

Recommendations

With the guidance of Nlakaʔamux principles and teachings, the next step is for communities and Scwʔexmx Child and Family to actively collaborate on creating short and long range work plans based on the Summary of Actions outlined in the following section.

- Determine how Scwʔexmx Child and Family, communities, and partners will collaborate.
- Review the actions identified in this framework and summarized in the table below.
- Identify priority actions to focus on immediately.
- Scope out a multi-year approach.
- Develop a work plan(s) with timelines and accountabilities.

Summary of Actions for Work Plans

Following the completion of the initial draft of this framework, working sessions were held with each of the four communities to review the document. The review process was an opportunity to further develop and expand on priorities and the action steps that should be taken.

The lists that follow represent the community priorities, directives, and concrete actions identified as part of the journey towards the long term vision of nkʔeytkn wellness. They provide the basis for the collaborative process that will be undertaken whereby Scwʔexmx Child and Family, partners, and Nlakaʔamux communities and families will work together to develop work plans for moving forward.

GUIDANCE FOR ACTION

- Meet families where they are at.
- It takes a community.
- Support everyone involved: children, parents, guardians, grandparents, and extended family.
- Promote culture, teach ceremony and language.
- Connect to the land.

ACTIONS: Families and Communities

This section identifies actions that Nlaka'pamux families and communities can take responsibility for working on directly. These actions will support and enrich the action steps identified in the following section for Scw'exmx Child and Family Services.

Everyone is responsible

- Revitalize traditional way of helping each other. Practice healthy living. Respect one another. Promote cultural guidance and healing for individual and intergenerational traumas.
- Work together to develop a community strategy for strengthening families including a standard of wellbeing for children.
- Create a supportive community system: family nights, get everyone out. Get involved and be aware of what is going on. Participate in activities.
- Encourage families to be inclusive and involve extended family in activities. Come together when families are struggling.
- Find the strong individuals in each family who are not afraid to address issues straight on and are willing to provide insight into how best to help families begin to heal.
- Be open and honest in communication as families. Understand situations from multiple perspectives.
- Start the discussion about guidelines for community behaviours and hold people accountable. Discuss and clarify when it is acceptable for community members to step in with other people's children.
- Ensure that our children in care are getting the assistance they need in terms of counsellors, education, tutors, cultural healing programs.

- Address the common issues of Indian Residential School impacts, intergenerational trauma, drugs and alcohol, sexual abuse, family violence. Have no tolerance to drugs and alcohol, violence, and abusers in communities.
- Leadership needs to be accountable to membership and be prepared to stand behind community staff to do the work that is required. Support staff when tough decisions must be made.
- Educate community about barriers that Indigenous people face. Reduce stigma, racism, discrimination.

Teach our people to be better parents and guardians

- Parenting Academy: teach patience, financial skills, routines, children’s health
- Teach parents and guardians how to discipline: Give permission to take their authority back.
- Ensure families are talking directly and not through electronics all the time. Recommend limits for use of technology devices: replace with family time outside, reading together, cultural activities. Do a media-free challenge.
- Create Parents Handbook with insights of Nlaka’pamux Elders.
- Acknowledge what dismantled parenting: IRS system, 60s Scoop.

Establish a transition home for nk’seytkn in each community

- Have a safe house on each reserve where families may learn and heal together.
- Parents and guardians can learn skills, connect with Elders.
- Social workers can bring children for safety.

Create a Grandmothers’ or Aunties’ Circle

- Keep aware of what is happening
- Take on role of extended family when needed
- Young families could feel safe to come to them for help and advocacy

Create a cultural resource space

- Have a place where families can go to learn cultural values
- Elders can teach the language and tell stories

Connect families with culture

- Practice cultural activities. Hand drum, teach songs, go to the water
- “Respect the land, respect the Elders.” – Jim

- Support parents and guardians to get their children to the programs and services, including providing transportation to functions.
- identify medicine people and Elders who can work with families.
- Do seasonal camps on the land: Gather food and medicine, Elders teach young ones respect and other values, land skills, food skills, cultural stories, language.
- Develop digital tools in our language: cartoons, language apps.



ACTIONS: Scw'exmx Child and Family Services

This section provides direction for the action items to be included in work plans for Scw'exmx Child and Family Services, communities, and partners.

Support families

- Do proactive planning for when parents and guardians need a time out. Include 24-hour respite, extended family supports, financial support, weekends. Support for caregivers is crucial: timely, supportive, strategize, debrief. Provide childcare as respite: List reliable in-community respite caregivers.
- Ensure there is a clear process for helping families address past traumas. There is a need to be able to pursue healing without judgement and to provide programs that address addiction and violence in a good way rather than perpetuating these issues.
- Ensure counsellors are being consistent and providing a voice for families.
- Address barriers to accessing programs including adding evening and weekend hours, effective outreach.
- Assist community to have gentle conversation about family roles.
- Have male staff work with men's programs.
- Do regular workshops on parenting topics: behavior issues, how to play together, eating together, outside activities, electronics.
- Continue to hold activities for youth. Keep youth engaged.
- Continue to host events in Merritt and advertise to surrounding communities.
- Explore how to support those families who see alcohol and drug use as normal and are unwilling to do the work.

How agencies should work together

- Address need at band level for more capacity to administer and respond. Liaison from bands to SCFSS. Develop service plan with each band.
- All organizations to function seamlessly together. Minimize transition issues.
- Develop Youth at Risk Strategy with all partners including: explore solutions with parents and guardians, address legal challenges. Talk to youth on the streets.
- Work with Housing and Admin to address need for adequate housing for families.
- Have information days with all agencies.
- This document needs to go to delegation training.

- Incorporate this document into NVIT social work program.

Social Workers

- Social Workers need to be visible in the community. Build relationships with families.
- Social workers must have mandatory sensitivity training. New employees and recent social work graduates must have orientation to this Framework and the communities. Identify what cultural sensitivity means in working with families. Introduce staff to the community.
- Develop a Nlaka'pamux orientation and training for staff, including attend seasonal camp, learn birth and grief practices.
- Have language classes for their workers so they are familiar with the language.
- Inform and engage extended family, grandparents and aunts and uncles in care of children for example, when a child is being moved from one home to another.
- Ensure care plans for children are implemented and followed up on, ensure homes are appropriate and children are cared for properly, including unannounced visits to homes. Include documentation of these.

Support families to stay together

- Review the structure of how apprehension happens.
- Educate community and partners. Put agreements in place with RCMP at community level.
- Instead of apprehension, have Elders work with the nk'seytkn first.
- Ensure there is supports for everyone involved, including staff, when tough decisions need to be made. Be realistic about what is possible and do not place children at risk.

Support more in-community caregivers

- Promote kinship care. Recruit community members who want to help children.
- Provide mentorship program for community-based caregivers. Provide access to Elders for support and questions.
- Revise caregiver care approval process to be more community friendly. Reduce paperwork.
- Support community to develop our own standards for caregivers. Create community-based caregiver homes with good values, non-judgmental.
- Ensure relatives caring for children by choice have the same funding and supports as non-community foster parents.
- Create a Handbook for Caregivers.
- Create a children's home with trained people where the children can go when they need to.

Non-community caregivers

- Make sure children visit their families often including extended family.
- Make involvement with community and culture mandatory. Provide access to Elders. Ensure kids spend time in community. Eat our foods. Have access to harvesting.
- Agreement and care plan should go with children to other jurisdictions.
- Create a Handbook for Caregivers.
- Provide mental health supports for children.

How to support youth aging out of the system

- Create a division in Scw'exmx Child and Family that plans for and supports transition.
- Provide additional supports up to age 27, including look at supports for youth with special needs as they age out.
- Develop connections to their families.
- Connect them with resources. Teach life skills.
- Develop a system that tracks and monitors previous and current children who age out of care and to advocate for them and ensure they have access to support and services.



Glossary

nk'seytkn family

nam ʔes zúminstm to give care, love, and guidance.

Resources

Cover photo and other basket photos sourced from: *Nlaka'pamux Roots: Known Makers & Their Baskets*, prepared by C'eyxkn Irene Bjerky for First Nations Baskets at the Langley Centennial Museum. See: http://museum.tol.ca/portals/5/baskets/nlakapamux_basket_makers.html

Beatrice Marie Anderson, *Nlaka'pamux Grandmothers' Traditional Teachings and Learnings*, PhD Thesis, UBC, Dec 2011.

William Rowluck, *A Narrative Inquiry into Nlaka'pamux Children's Response to Online Digital Curriculum Featuring Nlaka'pamux Parents and Elders*, Master of Education Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2016.

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Appendix: Our Baskets, Our Families

Elder Amelia Washington

Amelia Washington grew up learning about baskets from her mother and grandmother and aunts who were great basket makers. Amelia was fortunate to grow up rooted in the culture, traditions, and language. She spoke only the Nlaka’pamux language until she started attending Indian residential school when she was 11 or 12. She has continued the tradition of basket making, sharing baskets and the protocols and ceremonies that go with them with her children and grandchildren. Today, as an Elder, she continues to pass down knowledge of language, culture, and traditions – and also to share the art of basket making with her daughter and grandchildren. Her knowledge and insights about basket making, and the protocols and ceremonies that go with it, help to illustrate just how interwoven baskets are with Nlaka’pamux families.

Section 1 of this document uses excerpts from the following insights that Amelia shared.¹⁶

“You think it is simple, just making a basket, just coil it together, but there is so much more.

Before we go into our sacred land, we prepare ourselves. We have ceremonial practices to honor the sacredness of our land, especially if we’ve had a family member pass to the spirit world. Grieving practices differ within families, communities, and our Nation and it is recommended that people seek information about the process of grieving from their family.

When we go onto the land, we introduce ourselves to the land using our traditional Nlaka’pamux name. We state what we are there to do on the land, whether it is harvesting or ceremonial practice. In our prayer to Creator, we ask that no harm come to us while we are out on the land. We bring tobacco or traditional medicines to the land so that when we harvest berries or our medicine, we give an offering. We honor ourselves as women and wear a traditional skirt that has special significance for us and is made specifically for harvesting. We also wear a scarf on our heads.

¹⁶ These insights were shared in a basket-making conversation on April 10, 2018 and reviewed with Amelia on April 12, 2018.

The designs of the basket have been passed down to us through the generations of our families. If you take a look at a basket, it's like a story. You know exactly who has made it by the design and the materials.



Each family has their own protocols and beliefs. There are seasons to be picking the roots as well as the colors. You must pick at the right season, at the right place, and you prepare it in certain ways as directed by your Elder. Our family have used spruce root that we harvest in our sacred mountains. We typically picked them in sandy, loamy areas beside creeks. We use all natural elements of the land to make the colors. Different flowers, bark, and roots. The colors themselves have been passed down as well. How to make the greens. Bright red. Rusty brown. How to make it shiny. We use the root and the bark of the plant and then we preserve it. We waterproof it in certain ways. These are not public knowledge because they are things that have been passed down through the generations.

My grandmother always said that how you are when you gather the roots is important. You need to be in a good state. It is the same with making the basket. We are very careful, always monitoring ourselves so we don't touch the basket when we are angry or tired or feeling out of sorts. The working of the basket needs to be in that clear state of

mind. You don't touch the basket when you are in grief. As well, we don't touch them or our working implements when we women are in our cleansing time.

We have to always be mindful that learning basketry is a gift. Basketry is such an art and we need to keep it going strong. It helps with our identity and where we come from. It's an important teaching for our young to receive.

We honor all the materials that come to us. Including the equipment that comes to us. Our awls are often made especially for us by a father or uncle. They take a lot of work. Awls are kept wrapped in a special cloth, with tobacco, and put in a safe place so they don't break and so that we know where they are and we can use them readily.

There are three different kinds of cradle baskets or cradleboards that we use for our newborn babies. The first one is the coiled basket. When you are doing a cedar coil basket, you have the root that has been split into four strands in the middle. These become the inner coil. These four coils represent the importance of family, language, ceremony, and connection to land. These core four values help frame the cradle. Then each of the coilings of the cedar root represents everything that the individual needs on this physical plane. We want the new person to be a strong individual rooted in the culture, rooted on the land, rooted in the language. We want them to have strong family values and beliefs and involvement with the ceremonial practices – right from babyhood to Elder.

When you start the basket, you make your baseline and then you begin coiling over it. It overlaps and naturally forms into a basket. There are ways so you can shape it to the head and then lessen it down for the leg part. Those have family designs on them as well. If you want the child to be a berry picker or hunter, those symbols would go on their basket. There is a lot of prayers that go into the basket.

The cradleboards are made with the grandmother and the parents and the aunts and uncles. The grandmother and the mother sew the inner basket. Meanwhile, the father and uncles and grandfather go out on the land and harvest the materials we need. Then we get together and the making of the basket is a prayerful time. It is a sacred time when there are prayers said for the little baby that is being born. Everyone gets a chance to pray for what is best for the child. When you make the head part you pray for all the mental attributes you want for the child – so that anything they are seeking to learn comes quick and fast. At the arm part, you are praying for everything the child will do with their hands. Praying so they'll be strong and able to work quickly. When you make the lower part of the basket, you might pray for them to be able to walk in the

mountains and be a good hunter or a good berry picker. That they will have strong legs to carry them through their whole lives.

The Nlaka'pamux believe that our children come from the spirit. There are many different ceremonial practices we have to make sure that our children are rooted on this physical plane. Children come from the spirit world and our ceremonial practices tie them here to be with us.

In the welcoming ceremony, the babies are introduced to their extended family and community. This happens after the baby has been home with mom, dad, and grandma for a while. If this is a mother's first baby, we walk them in and welcome them as parents. If they already have other children, we still walk them through the fir boughs and cedars to acknowledge that they are bringing another sacred life into our family circle. It's also important for the grandparents. If it's their first time being a grandparent, we welcome them as a grandparent and acknowledge that they have made the transition from being a parent to being a grandparent. It's that public acknowledgment. We recognize that there may be times when the new parents might not know what their responsibilities are, so we let them know there are elders who will be their supports in helping them understand their new role. It builds up that support system.

When the child is presented, the grandparents will say: Here is the cradleboard, and here is how you lace the baby into the basket. The parents will be taught how to lace the baby into the basket. The lacing is not like a shoelace, but more like crochet so you just have to pull one knot and the whole string comes undone so you can take baby out in a second. The baby is laced into the cradleboard and introduced around the circle so that everyone in the circle has the opportunity to wish the baby all the good things in their life. This is when the commitment role comes into play. It is when an uncle might come forward and say: When you are of hunting age, I will take you hunting. Or for a girl, they might say: When it's time, I will take you berry picking. Or there might be uncles or aunts who promise to teach rites. Other family and community will step up and also make public statements offering support to the family. For young families who are feeling alone, the ceremony helps them realize they have a lot of support. For community, the public nature of the statements helps people be held collectively responsible. They will say to the parents: When you need time alone, I will be willing to watch baby. If you ever need support, I will be here for you. And then, because it is said verbally like that, everyone heard it and can remind them in case they forget. It also gives other people the chance to step in if, in the future, one person can't help."

Cedar Basket Making

The Lower Nicola Indian Band website showcases Nlaka'pamux baskets found in the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. See <http://lnib.net/history-and-culture/>

The website also features a video about cedar basket making by Brenda Crabtree, a master basket maker whose weaving focuses on traditional fibres such as inner cedar bark, cedar roots, spruce roots, and wool. Brenda learned this ancient art form from her grandmother who instilled in her the techniques related to the harvesting and making of baskets. As the Director of Aboriginal Programs at Emily Carr University of Art+Design, Brenda is committed to educating others about her craft and its historical traditions. Her teaching and art practice focuses on both traditional and contemporary Aboriginal materials and techniques. Her works are masterfully crafted and incorporate challenging text that highlight Aboriginal history. Brenda belongs to the Spuzzum Band and has both Nlaka'pamux and Stó:lō ancestry.

Cedar Basket Weaving with Brenda Crabtree can be found at <https://vimeo.com/126622123>