



# April 2025 NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS ISSUE

Take a look at the incredible photos from our recent Nicola Valley Youth Gathering. We have highlighted local Girl's Group activities, local training opportunities, fire prevention awareness and vaping awareness.



## Mission

We are all somebody's seventh generation. We are committed to work with our communities to create the necessary change to ensure children currently in care have the advocates they deserve and seven generations from now, the need for a child welfare system will no longer exist as our families will be whole and healthy.



## Vision

Work collectively to exercise n̄eʔk̄épmx and syil̄x inherent rights as we empower children, young people and families.

## tekm m̄íns | tá k'w̄úl'əm - Our Call to Action

We are at a critical moment in time. A great deal of change is taking place within the current political climate in which we exist. Bold steps are required to actualize the changes necessary for the communities we represent. For the first time since colonization, our action will fundamentally alter the foundation upon which outside governments have imposed political interests of assimilation through the systemic removal of our children.

For generations, our children have been the ones on the front line of federally and provincially legislated cultural genocidal regimes. Our families and communities were fractured but never broken. To achieve healing, justice and hope for each child ever removed from their parents, families and communities, it is up to us to provide a new reality for generations to come.

Through the wisdom of our ancestors, we have been taught the ways to care for one another. We must work toward a future markedly different from the current state wherein there are more Indigenous children in care now than at the height of the residential school era. While the current system is derived of legislation and policy, not of the Indigenous origin at a community level or otherwise, we undertake the process of decolonization to bring traditional knowledge, guidance and practices of the n̄eʔk̄épmx and syil̄x people forward in collaboration and guidance of our communities.

It is our responsibility to create the necessary change to ensure children currently in care have the advocates they deserve; and seven generations from now, the need for a child welfare system will no longer exist as our families will be whole and healthy. n̄eʔk̄épmx and syil̄x ancestors have anticipated this change and passed on their wisdom as we respond to this call to action. This very legacy is now ours to nurture and protect as we build a new platform where today's children, young people, families and communities will remain together and rekindle their cultural ways of being.

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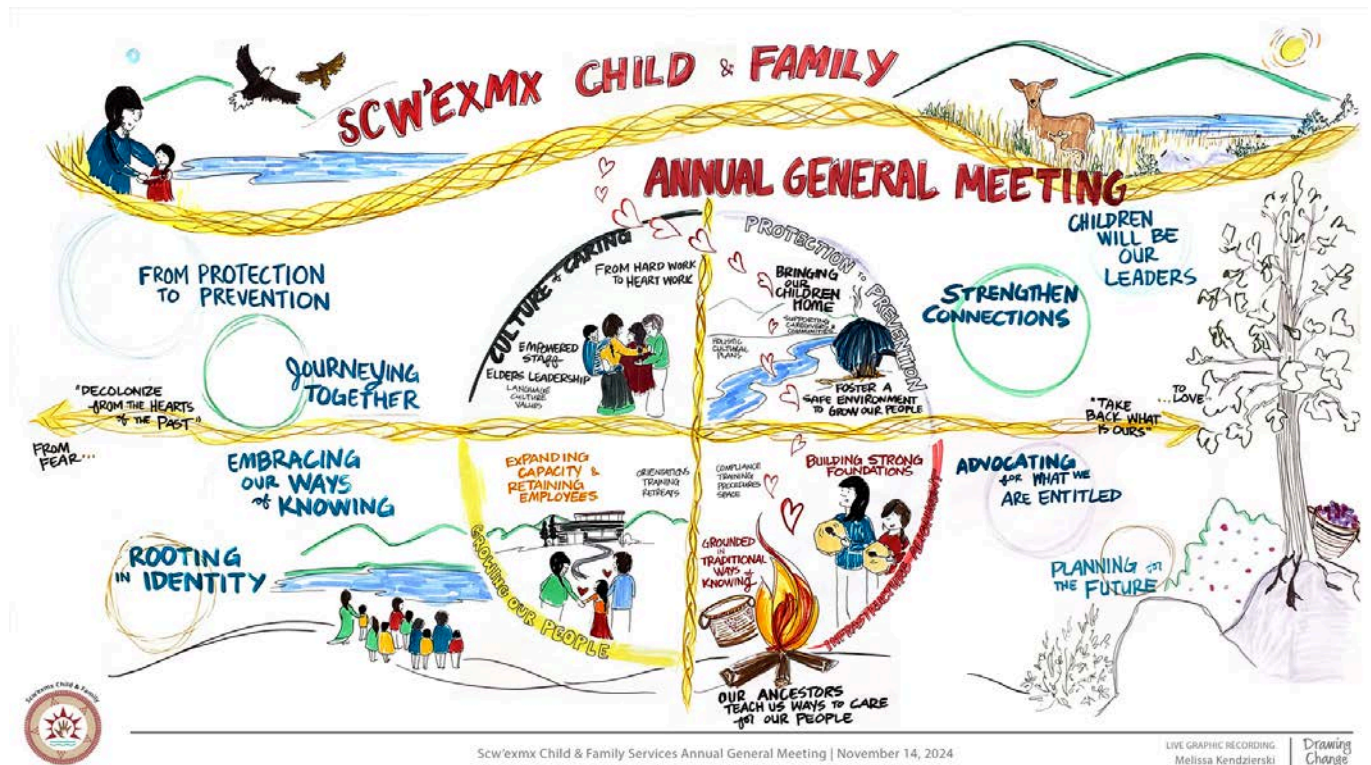
# SCFSS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## CULTURE OF CARING

- Communicate with one voice
- Integrate language and traditional teachings into programs and services
- Grow caregiver networks in alignment with traditional and community values
- Incorporate learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Return rights and responsibilities to our people through the development and implementation of Governance and Laws

## PROTECTION TO PREVENTION

- Bring and keep our children home
- Align programs and services with our vision
- Shift our focus from fear to love
- Build community engagement and capacity
- Build trusting relationships



## GROWING OUR PEOPLE

- Engage community expertise to support our vision
- Retain those committed to our vision
- Adopt, embrace, and implement cultural practice frameworks
- Acknowledge Post-traumatic Growth (PTG)
- Build professional capacity

## INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT

- Realign budgets to shift from protection to prevention
- Improve Information Technology support in current and post COVID-19 environment
- Structure change management to achieve our collaborative vision
- Improve prompt management reporting
- Integrate programs and services to build community capacity



## CULTURE & LANGUAGE TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

### FEEL THE BEAT – MARCH 13, 2025 – NOOAITCH

The Culture and Language Team, in collaboration with the Community Team, hosted "Feel the Beat" in Nooaitch. Community Prevention Worker Willa Ermineskin brought the girls' group to attend the event. This was a fantastic opportunity to learn cultural crafts; for this session, the group focused on beading. There were various options to choose from, including beading feathers, medicine pouches, or earrings. Many of the girls chose to bead feathers. Everyone enjoyed the food that was prepared for them. One girl particularly loved the spaghetti, saying it was her favorite and that she could eat a lot!

We encourage everyone to participate in our next "Feel the Beat" events on May 1st, 7th, and 15th, 2025. We will be sewing regalia, making leather cell phone holders and credit card sleeves. Watch for our post on Facebook to register!



*Shannon Boyce, Culture Coordinator*

### NOOAITCH GIRLS GROUP – MARCH 13, 2025

The Nooaitch Girls Group participated in the SCFSS's "Feel the Beat" event in Nooaitch, where they had the opportunity to learn how to create beaded feathers from the SCFSS Culture Team. This was the first time most of the girls experienced beading a feather, and everyone enjoyed the experience and teachings. Nine girls attended Feel the Beat, along with Ethan and Shannon from our Culture and Language Team, Willa from our Community Services Team, Traci from our Child Wellness Team, Shaniece from Nooaitch Band, and other Nooaitch community members. We were happy to see a room full of learners.

Feel the Beat happens monthly and features amazing cultural activities. Watch for next month's sessions, where you can learn how to sew regalia and the art of leather crafting.

One of the community members donated an eagle feather to the Culture Team. Ethan beaded it during the workshop and asked who it could be donated to.

The Girls Group has been learning about smudging practices and needed a feather. Now, smudging will be more spiritual and uplifting for all with this amazing gift.

One Nooaitch Elder was present and hadn't beaded in over 20 years. He was happy to visit and see all the youth learning to bead.

Ethan shared the importance of smudging with an eagle feather, including the importance of caring for and keeping your eagle feather safe.

**Scan the QR code** to learn more by watching "Eagle Feather Teaching by Janine Desmoulin" on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDa8woZAODM>

Video Caption: Join us for a profound and enlightening Eagle Feather Teaching with the remarkable Janine Desmoulin, presented by the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA). In this insightful session, Janine shares her wisdom on the significance of the eagle feather in Indigenous culture.

About Janine Desmoulin: Janine is a respected Indigenous Knowledge Keeper. With a wealth of knowledge and experience, she imparts the sacred teachings of the eagle feather, offering a unique perspective that resonates with the rich cultural heritage of our communities. [Link](https://www.onwa.ca/learning-resources) For more information on ONWA and our commitment to preserving and sharing Indigenous wisdom, visit our website: <https://www.onwa.ca/learning-resources> Let us honor and celebrate the teachings that connect us all. Miigwetch!



*Willa Ermineskin, Community Prevention Worker*



# Lucky Logger e sʔiʔms

## Lucky Logger Song

FirstVoices has amazing language resources for all. Scan the QR code below to learn the Lucky Logger e sʔiʔms - Lucky Logger - Stick Game song.



This song and artwork is borrowed from the FirstVoices website. View & listen by clicking the following link or scanning the QR code: <https://www.firstvoices.com/nlekepmxcin/songs/4c7b91cf-8d0c-4eb8-9554-47610aa167b9>

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Tracey Aljam
- Ernie Michel





# April Showers

As we joyfully welcome the refreshing April showers, we gear up for a summer brimming with excitement and bounty. This season of growth brings with it a rich tapestry of language to explore.

Reach out to your wise knowledge keepers for help with pronouncing these phrases.

The phrases in **red** are in n̄eʔk̄épmxc̄in, while those in **turquoise** are in ns̄yilxc̄ən.

Additionally, we've provided a QR code for you to dive into the enchanting audio experience that accompanies these phrases. Happy learning and joyful listening!



naḥ qʷuyiʔ he tmixʷ



**Cloudy**



kt'map



snéwt



**Wind**



sniw't



stékʔ



**Rain**



sq'it



syəmyj̄m



**Rainbow**



skʷmkʷimcxn



## COMMUNITY PREVENTION TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

### NOOAITCH GIRLS GROUP - TRIP TO THE COVE - MARCH 25-27, 2025

Willa and Traci from the SCFSS Community and Child Wellness teams collaborated with Nooaitch to organize and support a spring break trip for the Nooaitch Girls Group to the Cove Lakeside Resort the focus was on self-care activities.

The focus of the Girls Group is on self-care, reconnection with oneself and with other adults/mentors. Every four weeks, there is a cultural lesson. For the next session, the girls will learn how to sew a ribbon skirt.

Some key benefits of the Girls Group include building self-confidence, learning about themselves through all aspects of the medicine wheel, and achieving balance between their emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual selves. They also build connections with their peers and adults/mentors within the community, so they know who to reach out to if they ever need support. The program is presented through teachings from YouPower, which offers many training options to support communities in developing their own girls/boys groups to help youth find direction in life and make healthy decisions.

Many of the girls enjoyed their trip to Kelowna, saying, "This was really fun and I'm really happy to be here!" Eight girls attended with three Nooaitch chaperones, one from Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly, as well as Willa and Traci from Scw'exmx Child & Family.

This event was an opportunity for the girls to experience an adventure away from the community. Some of the activities at the Cove included getting their hair tinsel and braided by Kirsten Tom (Syilx Smokin' Braidz). Willa also facilitated a 'girl power' session centered around journaling.

We are excited to witness the continued growth of these remarkable girls as they connect with themselves and their community.

Through activities like the spring break trip and ongoing sessions, we aim to empower them with the skills and confidence needed to thrive. We look forward to supporting their journey and seeing them flourish in all aspects of their lives.



#### What is YouPower?

Since 2003, YouPower (formerly known as WCET) has trained community workers in First Nation and Aboriginal communities and non-profit agencies throughout Canada, from the west coast to the east coast. The three training programs include Girl Power, a pre-adolescent girls program, 2BBoys, a pre-adolescent boys program, and Fempower, a young mothers' program.

#### What does YouPower do?

YouPower programs promote healthy emotional and social development of youth within communities across Canada. Through education, skill-building, introspection and play, YouPower encourages and fosters self-efficacy, self-expression, authenticity in relating to themselves and others, internal empowerment, cultural identity, enhanced decision-making skills, and ultimately increased self-esteem and self-value.

#### Who can benefit from YouPower trainings?

YouPower trainings are designed for community leaders, educators, social workers, counsellors, Mental health workers, community nurses, CHR's, RCMP, elders, parents and others who support the growth and development of young people.

**If you are interested in bringing this training to your community/organization, please visit their website: <https://www.youpower.ca/> or scan the QR code below.**



Willa Ermineskin, Community Prevention Worker



## COMMUNITY PREVENTION TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

### 2025 PIT HOMELESS COUNT

A Point-in-Time (PiT) awareness session was held on March 11-12, 2025. Team members from our community—Lacey, Jalissa, and Satara—actively participated in the planning meetings for the 2025 PiT Homeless Count, with Ask Wellness leading the initiative.

During the planning, the idea was proposed to host two awareness lunches for the community prior to the count. SCFSS supported this initiative by providing homemade hamburger soup and sandwiches.

Thanks to a collaborative effort with Ask Wellness, our organizations distributed over 120 servings of soup and sandwiches to the community. This was a valuable opportunity for internal collaboration, with team members from the Family Wellness, Child Wellness, and Community Teams joining forces to prepare lunch. Additionally, the partnership between SCFSS and Ask Wellness was instrumental in making the event a success. Lunch was distributed to a diverse group of community members, including individuals of all ages—from youth to the elderly. The goal was to ensure that everyone, regardless of age or background, had access to a warm meal and support.

One of the community members served said, "Delicious soup, thank you for the lunch!"

Ask Wellness Mission: The mission of the Society under our constitution is:

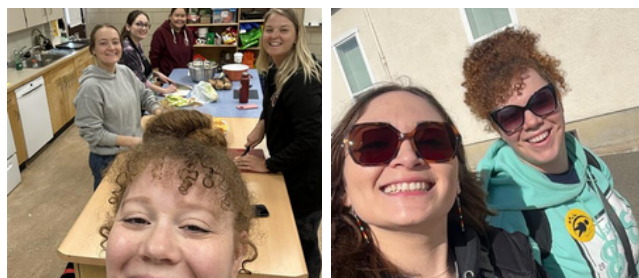
To provide outreach, housing, health, education, employment, and emotional support services for the marginalized and persons at risk. To promote financial, emotional, and personal care support services to the community for individual/family/friends affected by HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, the marginalized and persons at risk-if and when the need arises. To liaise with other local/provincial/national organizations involved/interested in HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, the marginalized and persons at risk. To promote research on HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, the marginalized and persons at risk. To receive donations, grants and funds, and to administer the same consistent with the objectives of the society. Learn more by visiting their website at <https://askwellness.ca/>

On the morning of April 3rd, nine SCFSS staff joined the PiT Homeless Count Volunteers for a brief survey training before heading out into the community. Once the training was wrapped up, we broke into teams and hit the pavement, covering various areas around Merritt. Each of us ended up walking an average of 10,000–12,000 steps as we connected with individuals and gathered valuable data throughout the day. After a busy and meaningful few hours, we returned to the ASK office for a delicious lunch of chili cheese hot dogs and snacks. Three of our Elders were also present to offer smudging and brushing off—a grounding and appreciated way to close out the day.

A week after the event, Jonathan Winser, who is the Housing and Street Outreach Worker at ASK, shared this thoughtful message:

"Hi everyone, It has been a week since the PiT Homeless Count in Merritt! I just wanted to thank everyone for their support that day. I hope everyone had a good time meeting some new faces. The folks at HSABC told me that we did a very good job. They were happy to see so many community partners come together for the count."

We're incredibly proud to have been part of this collective effort. A big thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the PiT Count a success!



Satara Twan, Community Prevention Worker



# COMMUNITY PLANNING TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

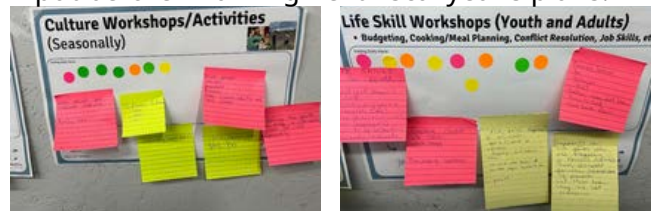
## Coldwater Prevention Engagement March 8, 2025

The Coldwater Community Engagement Prevention Program Engagement Lunch brought the community together to learn about family prevention, hear about the prevention programs Coldwater developed and implemented last year in collaboration with community partners, and gather input on desired programs for the next fiscal year to inform Coldwater's budgets and workplans. Community members voted on wellness programs and provided feedback and suggestions for future initiatives.

SCFSS and Coldwater Social Development staff co-facilitated this event to ensure the planning for next fiscal year reflects the community's actual needs and wants. Participants will directly impact Coldwater's budgets and programs for next year, helping shape the future of their community. We had 21 community members in attendance from various age groups, each receiving six votes in our voting activity.

"It was a great day. Thank you to the community members that took time out of their day to participate in this engagement. Thanks to SCFSS staff for supporting Coldwater Band social development department in putting together an awesome presentation, and Wanda Brooks for the great meal. We are so grateful for community input, giving us new ideas, and reminding us to do more for our youth and community garden (especially with inflation!)" - Velma Collins

We are working with Coldwater to develop additional steps to gather more community input before finalizing next fiscal year's plans.



Stephanie Tourand, Community Planner



# JURISDICTION JOURNEYS

We are continuing with our new newsletter section focused on supporting our communities with news of legislative changes regarding Indigenous Child and Family Services, along with information and showcases of Indigenous Legal Traditions and work on upholding Inherent Jurisdiction. "Jurisdiction is not something that you sign, it is something that you do. You don't have to wait to sign something to exercise jurisdiction in some of the most important ways for children" - Cindy Blackstock

**This month's focus is:**

## Scw'exmx Tribal Council's Feb 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> Workshop with Centre for First Nations Governance: Our Inherent Right to Self-Governance



Scw'exmx Tribal Council's Title & Rights Stewardship Department hosted a two-day workshop from February 11-12, 2025, with facilitators from the Centre for First Nations Governance (Satsan & Chris Robertson). Approximately 50 participants attended, representing communities across the valley.

The workshop focused on transforming the way First Nations govern, covering topics such as the Indian Act, the historical struggle for recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, the Five Pillars of Our Inherent Rights to Self-Government, consultation and accommodation, inherent rights strategy, and future governance of our lands and ourselves.

Two of our community team members, Stephanie and Lacey, attended the workshop. Facilitators Herb and Chris simplified complex legal frameworks like the Indian Act and

relevant case law, making them clear and impactful. Throughout the two days, we spent significant time in breakout groups discussing how these concepts apply to our communities—how our nation has changed since colonization, how we can rebuild and exercise our inherent rights, and what strategies we want to implement immediately.

It was uplifting to see community members from across the valley express their interest in advancing self-governance strategies collectively, showcasing the power of the Scw'exmx communities standing together.

The work Scw'exmx Tribal Council is doing to support title and rights in our communities is commendable, and this foundation could support other areas of jurisdiction, such as child and family welfare. Our organization is immersed in information regarding Bill C-92 and nations developing their own family welfare laws under this process. The strategies shared by the Centre for First Nations Governance under other governance pillars will also support our communities exploring different jurisdiction paths in child and family welfare. The more we come together, have these conversations collectively, and remove silos in the work our different communities and organizations are doing, the better equipped we will be to stand up for the rights of our communities.

STC's Title and Rights team expressed the intent to hold follow-up workshops, including more community members, to start determining our collective actions in implementing strategies to advance self-governance. We look forward to being involved in future discussions.



*Stephanie Tourand, Community PLanner*



*Lacey McRae Williams, Community Manager*



# APRIL 2025

## - Community Calendar -

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1 NIB - DRUM NIGHTS	2	3 SIB - SEWING WORKSHOP UNB - NSYLXCN GATHERING	4 NIB - YOUTH SWIM	
6	7 LNIB - DROP-IN BEADING	8 CIB - WOMEN'S GROUP NIB - DRUM NIGHTS	9 LNIB - ELDERS LUNCHEON	10 SIB - COTTONBUD HARVESTING	11 SIB - HEALING FROM GRIEF AND LOSS WORKSHOP NIB - YOUTH SWIM	SCF - MEN'S GROUP BOWLING 4-8 PM SIB - HEALING FROM GRIEF AND LOSS WORKSHOP
13 LNIB - EASTER PARTY	14 SCF - WOMEN'S GROUP 5-8PM @CIVIC CENTRE LNIB - DROP-IN BEADING	15 NIB - DRUM NIGHTS	16	17 UNB - NSYLXCN GATHERING SIB - EASTER CELEBRATION CIB - CALLING OUR SPIRITS HOME DINNER & PRESENTATION	18 SCF - OFFICES CLOSED NIB - YOUTH SWIM	
20	21 SCF - OFFICES CLOSED	22 SIB - COMMUNITY CLEAN-UP CIB - WOMEN'S GROUP NIB - DRUM NIGHTS UNB - EASTER SCAVENGER HUNT	23	24 SIB - BASKET WEAVING WORKSHOP ONLINE SAFETY & VAPING INFORMATION	25 SIB - PLAYGROUP NIB - YOUTH SWIM	
27	28 SIB - WELLNESS CIRCLE	29 NIB - DRUM NIGHTS	30	1	2	



**Coldwater:**

- Girls Group (9+) | Coldwater Health Building | Monday | 3:30-4:45pm
- Youth Drop-in | Coldwater School Gym | Tuesday | 6-7:30pm
- Walking Group | Coldwater School Gym | Wednesday | 3:30-4:30pm
- After School Drop-in | Coldwater Health Building | Thursday | 3:30-4:30

**Nooaitch:**

- After School Drop-in | SCHSS Satellite Office | Tuesday | 3:34-5:30pm
- Drum Nights | Nooaitch Band Hall | Tuesday | 5-7pm
- Gym Night (6+) | Nicola Canford School | Wednesday | 6-7:30pm
- Girl's Group | Nooaitch Band Hall | Thursday | 4-6pm
- Youth Swim | Nicola Valley Aquatic Centre | Friday | 3-5pm

**LNIB:**

- After School Recreation | Varies | Sun-Wed | 2:30-4:45pm

**Shackan:**

- After School Drop In (ages 6+) | SCHSS Satellite Office | Tuesday | 3:45-5pm
- Gym Night (ages 6+) | Nicola Canford School | Wednesday! | 6-7:30pm
- Youth Swim | Nicola Valley Aquatic Centre | Friday | 3-5pm

**UNB:**

- Girls Group (ages 11-16) | Kwu Stemtima Office | Monday | 4:30-6:30pm
- UNB Volleyball Nights | Colletville Gym | Wednesday | 6-9pm

**Legend:**

- Event Name | Location | Day | Time

## FAMILY TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

### MEN'S GROUP RETREAT - MARCH 14-16, 2025 - AGASSIZ & VANCOUVER

The men's group brought 16 members from the surrounding five communities, along with two support staff (one for First Aid & Security and one coordinator), for a retreat from Agassiz to Vancouver from March 14-16, 2025. The participants' ages ranged from 26 to 74. Our first stop was at Harrison Hot Springs in Agassiz on March 14th, where the group enjoyed Chinese food for dinner and relaxed in the hot springs afterward. On Saturday the 15th, we started with a buffet breakfast and drove to Vancouver to check in at the Coast Coal Harbor Hotel. We visited the UBC Museum of Anthropology to view some Interior Salish and Coastal Salish cedar root baskets. After dinner at the hotel, we attended the Vancouver vs. Chicago NHL game in a 20-person suite at Rogers Arena, cheering as the Vancouver Canucks won! On Sunday the 16th, we began with a buffet breakfast at the hotel and visited Science World before heading home. We stopped in Chilliwack for lunch and made it back to Merritt by 5 pm. The men had a great time together, forming quality friendships within the Coyote Brotherhood.

Creating safe spaces for men to network and share their stories is an invaluable opportunity that cannot be forced. Some men had never been to these venues before, while others had, but sharing these experiences together while maintaining a healthy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual connection to themselves and others was truly honorable to witness. It is why I take pride in doing this work for the nations. Each man received a Coyote Brotherhood Carhart jacket, a leather journal, a Coyote Brotherhood backpack, the book "Just Be You" by Wayne Kaboni, Coyote Brotherhood pens, boots from Work-N-Play, and money for meals.

Attending these events can change perspectives. Residential school survivors were part of this event, and other younger men (19-35) who are apart of men's group can greatly benefit from attending. The opportunity to speak with survivors and hear their stories can open the eyes of our younger men to realize the impact they can make by stepping out of their comfort zone. Growing stronger men means growing stronger families, and ultimately, stronger nations. We can do amazing work, but we need the younger generations of men to step up and claim their blood-right as children and stewards of these unceded lands.

"Was a great time Jason, thank you very much, I was able to heal a bit enough to calm myself down and grow, to move forward and mend was great, it's not over but just started but I now have you all and the stories and laughter we all shared this trip sure helped me to say things will be okay." - William Ned (LNIB Member)

"Great job there Jason, it was a great way to let go of some of the things I have carried with me. I experienced a number of things for the first time. I am grateful for being part of this adventure. It was a positive experience for me. Thanks to all the brothers who accepted me as I am." - Bill Douglas (Okanagan Nation Alliance)

"I had a great weekend. Connecting with men who I grew up with as boys. Meeting some of you again for the first time with some who I knew as boys and are now men. Common bonds amongst us are many and I found that I am truly grateful to call you guys my brothers. Our bonds grew stronger this weekend. My heart grew stronger as well." - Leonard Joe (Shackan Member)





# FAMILY TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

"It was great, I had some really good laughs till tears came out of my eyes, other times just sat and listened to some sad stories." - Darryl Shackelly (Nooaitch Member)

"Went out of my comfort zone big time this weekend and I learned to just enjoy and relax and take the moment in, had a lot of fun off the reserve. I don't do cities much and keep my circle small being able to share some stories with others and meet new brothers was great thank you Jason, glad I was able to go." - Adrian Retasket (Nooaitch Member)

"I had a great weekend, did my max in steps three days in a row and made my record steps, first time this year. I am happy we all jumped into the big city and had a blast, strengthen the brotherhood that much more." - Derek Sheena (LNIB Member)

"It was an awesome retreat. I Had to trust the young minds and young thoughts to make choices for me. Most times good choices and sometimes plans didn't work out but as a team we had options. The stories we told, the stories we heard, we all had silent battles and silent resilience in our blood. As men we wore our scars with pride. We awaken our sacred clowns with laughter. We were country boys walking in the world of cement and steel. Sometimes we looked for mountains and all we saw were skyscrapers. The retreat was a time to make friends, a time to reflect on old memories and a time to heal. Some of us have been around for a long time, we've got to pass the torch to those who need it." - Dennis Saddleman, Word warrior (Coldwater Member)

Dennis Saddleman is a award winning n̄e?k̄épmx author from Coldwater Indian Band who was excited to join the retreat. There are copies of his book - "Word Warrior" available for sale at the Territory of the People Office in Kamloops - please email Clair at - office@territory.anglican.ca. Alternatively, you can call SCFSS to inquire about Dennis' book.



Jason Ermineskin, Men's Group Coordinator



## YOUTH TEAM UPDATES - MARCH

### ANNUAL NICOLA VALLEY YOUTH GATHERING - MARCH 25-27, 2025

We invited youth ages 13-18 to attend our Annual Nicola Valley Youth Gathering. This year, we focused on building connections, celebrating culture, and sharing valuable lessons from the land. We organized several on-the-land activities at four of our surrounding bands. Youth enjoyed both indoor and outdoor activities throughout the day, while in the evenings, we welcomed presenters Jordin Tootoo and Laura GrizzlyPaws. Our goal was to get our youth out on the land, keeping them active, building connections, and celebrating culture. The youth learned how to work together during culturally based activities, and in the evenings, they got to sit back and relax while taking in the wisdom from presenters they looked up to as mentors.

We had 75 youth join us for this gathering, coming from seven of our surrounding bands. We welcomed our elders daily for this event. Each day started with a morning prayer, and our elders joined us for parts of the day at the surrounding bands. Our elders also chose the food served at the banquet dinner, while a few of our youth helped prep and serve the meal.

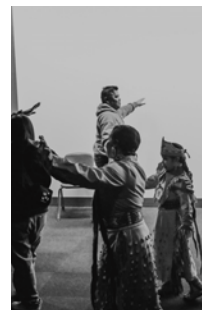
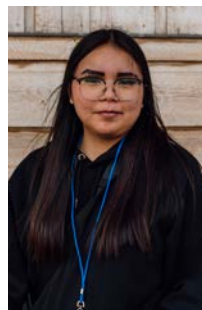
There were several community resource tables set up throughout the three-day event. The tables had various merchandise to give away to the youth, as well as brochures and information about the services and resources available to them in and around the community. Some of our attendees included Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and Interior Health.

The youth enjoyed the conference and had this to say: "Wow, Jordin Tootoo is famous, I need his autograph." While learning some new games, one youth said, "Man, Knobby ball is so much fun." At the close of the conference, one youth stated, "I don't want this to be over already."

Jakob Knudsen (Syilx/Stō:ló/Métis/Danish) is the graphics and production specialist at Indigenous Youth Wellness. He was present at the Youth Gathering provided the attendees and workers with awesome swag. He is one of the creators of the Culture Bytes Podcast (available wherever podcasts are found), which is an indigenous youth wellness podcast that highlights amazing indigenous youth in BC, with new episodes out biweekly on Thursdays.

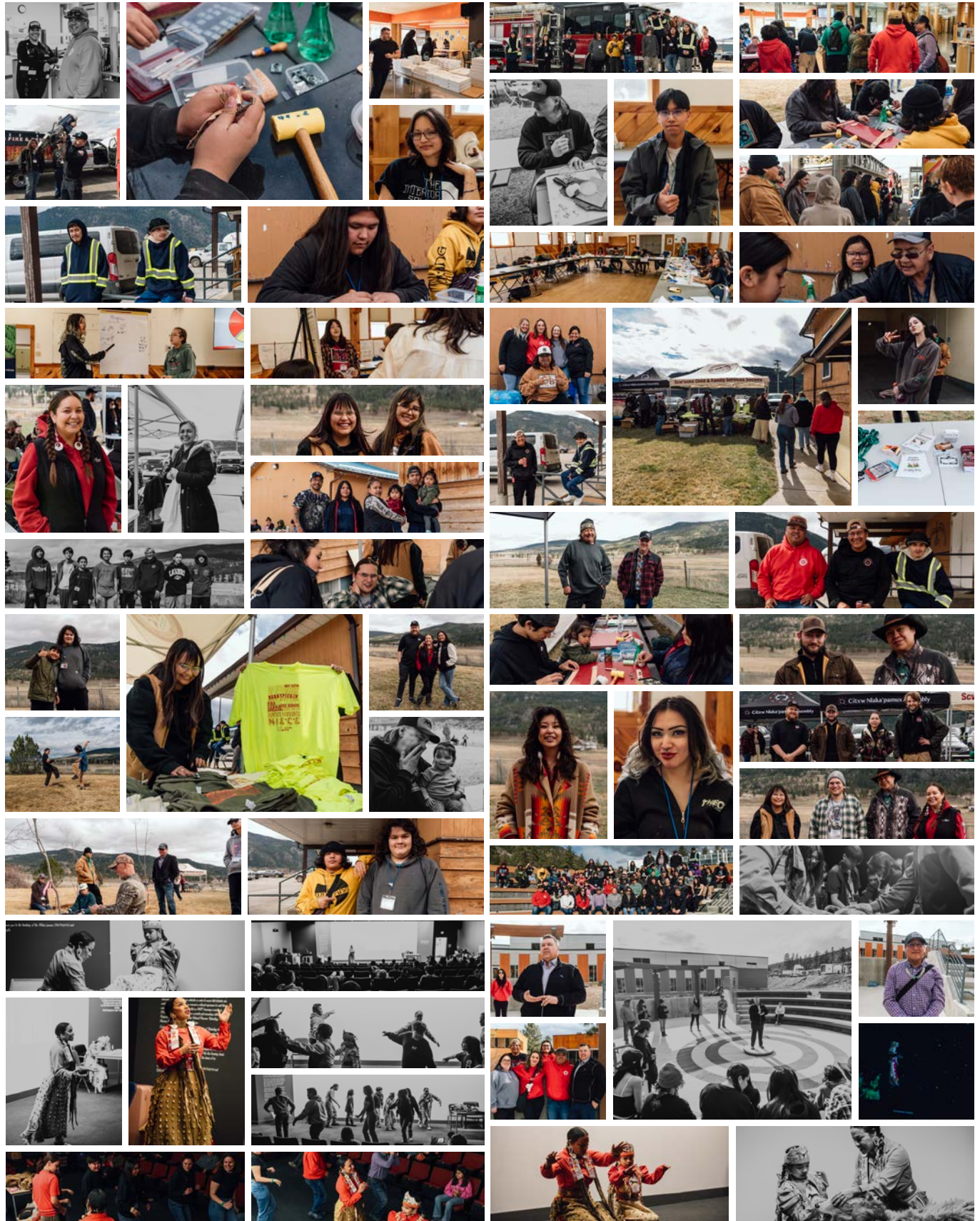
<https://www.indigenouslyouthwellness.ca/podcasts> scan the QR code below to listen in!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our contributors, partners, and staff for making these days impactful and filled with enjoyable teachings for our youth. Special thanks to our partners: Ebus (for donating buses and covering transportation fees), NVIT, Wildland Firefighters, Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly, and K'en T'em.



*Candice Dolman, Youth Transition Coordinator*

# YOUTH GATHERING DAY 1



PROTECTION TO PREVENTION



# YOUTH GATHERING DAY 2



# YOUTH GATHERING DAY 2

PROTECTION TO PREVENTION



# YOUTH GATHERING DAY 3





# VAPING - YOUTH SUPPORTS TO QUIT OR CUT BACK

## WHAT IS VAPING

Vaping is when you breathe in a mist made by an electronic cigarette, vape pen, or a special device called a "mod." Unlike regular cigarettes, vaping doesn't burn the stuff you inhale.

Vaping devices can be used to inhale different liquids. They have a mouthpiece, a battery, a container for the liquid, and a part that heats up the liquid. The battery powers the heater, which turns the liquid into a mist that you breathe in.

## WHAT'S IN THE VAPOUR

Vapes don't just make water vapor. The liquid inside vapes usually has nicotine and flavors mixed in. This liquid is made from stuff like propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin, along with other chemicals. The flavors come from different chemicals mixed together to create various tastes.



### THE NICOTINE IN VAPE JUICE IS JUST AS ADDICTIVE AS THE NICOTINE IN CIGARETTES, AND IT CAN BE TOUGH TO CUT BACK OR QUIT VAPING.

Ask yourself, "Do I rely on vaping?"

- Vaping affects me and/or those around me.
- When I can't vape, I feel cranky, restless, anxious, sad, or tired.
- I can't go a day without vaping.
- I've thought about vaping less or quitting.

If you said yes to any of these, you might want to get help with vaping issues.

Quitting things like nicotine is easier when you have a plan. Think about getting help from people who understand what you're going through and can give you expert advice for free, without judging you, and keeping it private.

VISIT [QuitNow](#)  
1-877-455-2233

or

use live chat to get support from a Quit Coach.

QuitNow is a free service for those who want to cut back or quit.

It's judgment-free, confidential, and personalized for you.

VISIT [talktobacco.ca](#)

or

call 1-833-998-TALK

or

text CHANGE to 123456.

Talk Tobacco offers free, confidential, culturally appropriate support and information to First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous communities.

VISIT [Foundry BC](#),

who offers young people ages 12-24 health and wellness resources, services, and support – online and through service centers in communities across BC.

LEARN MORE >





## WHY FIRE-SAFE YOUR HOME?

Living in the Nicola Valley — whether you're in Merritt, or part of the Coldwater, Nooaitch, Lower Nicola, Upper Nicola, or Shackan communities — means you're in a region with a high wildfire risk, especially during the hot, dry summer months. Fire-safing your home, whether you're in town or out on the land, isn't just smart — it's essential.

✓ **This fire-safing checklist will help you get ready for the dry, windy summer conditions we often face — so you can protect your home, family, and community.**



### 1. Defensible Zones Around the Home

#### Zone 1 (0–1.5 meters from your home)

- Remove anything flammable (firewood, mulch, patio furniture).
- Use gravel or non-flammable surfaces.
- Plant fire-resistant plants (avoid juniper, cedar).
- Keep roofs and gutters clean.
- Use fire-resistant roofing and siding.
- Install spark arrestors on chimneys.

#### Zone 2 (1.5–10 meters)

- Keep grass short and watered.
- Trim tree branches up to 2 meters from the ground.
- Remove shrubs or low branches that can spread fire.
- Space trees apart.
- Keep trailers, RVs, and fuel tanks at least 10 meters away.

#### Zone 3 (10–30+ meters)

- Thin out trees and shrubs.
- Regularly remove dead wood and debris.
- Create firebreaks with gravel or dirt roads.
- Use grazing or mowing to keep areas clear.

### 2. Outbuildings, Equipment & Water Access

- Fire-smart sheds and barns using metal or fire-resistant materials.
- Store fuel and propane away from structures, ideally in fire-rated containers.
- Keep grass mowed around all structures and fence lines.
- Ensure farm equipment (quads, tractors) have spark arrestors.
- Have a backup generator and fuel ready (power often goes out in fire season).
- Keep large water tanks or access to a pond with a gas-powered pump.
- Mark water sources clearly for fire crews.

### 3. Livestock & Animal Safety

- Have an evacuation plan for horses and livestock (trailers ready, routes planned).
- Keep halters and leads ready for every animal.
- Pre-identify safe areas for animals (e.g., sand arenas, plowed fields).
- Consider permanent ID like tattoos, microchips, or ear tags.

### 4. Emergency & Evacuation Prep

- Sign up for emergency alerts (e.g., Voyent Alert for Merritt and the TNRD).
- Keep a go-bag ready with essentials for 72 hours.
- Make copies of ID, insurance, and home inventory.
- Have a paper and digital map of your property (for first responders).
- Make sure your address and access roads are well-marked.

Scan here for self-assessment tools for your home and property.



Heather Fairley, Occupational Health & Safety Specialist



## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society (SCFSS) is family-centered and guided by nłe?kėpmx and syilx traditional knowledge and principles. SCFSS utilizes prevention and protection strategies with the collective goal to keep children with their families and communities. SCFSS recognizes historical challenges and is guided by traditional strength and wisdom to build family and community capacity in a monumental shift from protection to prevention.

As an Indigenous organization serving the nłe?kėpmx and syilx communities, SCFSS prioritizes the hiring of nłe?kėpmx and syilx community members. Following community member priority and pursuant to Section 41 of the BC Human Rights Code, preference may be given to qualified applicants of Indigenous ancestry.

**Current Postings**

- Children & Youth with Support Needs (CYSN) Support Worker
- Community Services Team Leader
- Delegated Manager
- IT Technician (Tier 1)
- Social Work

\*Check our website regularly, we will post there first!

**APPLY NOW**

See our full postings and apply on our website at [www.scwexmx.com](http://www.scwexmx.com)

Submit your cover letter and resume on our website, you can also send inquiries to: [jobs@scwexmx.com](mailto:jobs@scwexmx.com)





## LOCAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



# CARPENTRY LEVEL 2 TRAINING

### PROGRAM DETAILS:

**Who:**

Apprentices who have completed level 1 and have a minimum of 1 year experience. Limited seats available

**What:**

Carpentry Level 2 Training

**Where:**

Community hall, Douglas Lake

**When:**

May 5 - June 27, 2025  
30 hours a week, 4 days a week

**Cost:**

No charge for tuition and books

In collaboration with Upper Nicola Band, Thompson Rivers University, and the Construction Foundation, we are excited to offer Carpentry Level 2 training.

**REGISTER HERE:** [bit.ly/4j6X40F](https://bit.ly/4j6X40F)



Scan QR Code to Register

**If you require additional information, contact:**

**Geneve | 250-350-3342 Patsy | 250-329-4500**



# LOCAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



Shine On

## Breakthrough to Employment and Training Program

 **Ages 17 -29**

Are you experiencing stress or anxiety about navigating the tough job market? Sign up for our **FREE** 5-week online **YBEAT** employment program!



### YBEAT supports youth who are:

- seeking their first job
- lacking work experience
- being laid off
- adjusting to reduced work hours
- recent graduates stalled in their job search
- getting callbacks or interviews
- and more!

**Scan the QR code to sign up for an upcoming information session!**

### Upcoming 2025 Cohort:

- BC program - April 14 to May 16

 [gv.ymca.ca/ybeat](http://gv.ymca.ca/ybeat)

 [ybeat.bc@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:ybeat.bc@bc.ymca.ca)

Canada



Funding provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada-British Columbia Workforce Development Agreement.



# SCW'EXMX CHILD & FAMILY NEWSLETTER SIGN UP!



Would you like to receive newsletters and updates from Scw'exmx Child & Family? Scan or click the QR code below to sign up for our newsletter today!



[www.scwexmx.com](http://www.scwexmx.com) / [facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily](https://facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily) / [Instagram.com/scwexmxchildandfamily](https://Instagram.com/scwexmxchildandfamily)

# Scw'exmx Child & Family

Child Wellness Concern After Hours? Please Call:

**1-800-663-9122**

## Children's Help Line for Children and Youth

Do you need help?

If you don't feel safe or you have a concern, you can call this number 24-hours a day for free from any phone.

**310-1234**

## Scw'exmx Child & Family Services Society

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Downtown Address: 1988 Quilchena Ave., Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Mailing Address: 1750 Lindley Creek Rd, Merritt, BC V1K 0A3

Prevention Hub Address: 2475 Merritt Ave, Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Quilchena Address: Unit #2 - 3512 Highway 5A, Quilchena, BC V0E 2R0

Telephone: 250-378-2771

[www.scwexmx.com](http://www.scwexmx.com)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily](https://facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily)



Healthy Children



Healthy Communities



Healthy Families