



June 2025 NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

Stay updated with the latest news from our teams, including information about the upcoming Nicola Valley Canoe Pull, inspiring stories of our teams' achievements for May, and much more!

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 nte?képmx and syilx inherent rights as we empower children, young people and families.

tekm míns | tá k'wúl'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 nte?képmx and syilx 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. nte?képmx and syilx 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 CALL TO ACTION - MISSION & VISION

3 SCFSS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

4 CULTURE OF CARING

- 4-5 Community Calendar
- 6-7 Culture & Language Team Updates
- 8 June Vocabulary Language Resource
- 9-10 Community Services Team Updates
- 11-12 Jurisdiction Journeys
- 13 Nicola Canoe Pull

14 PROTECTION TO PREVENTION

- 14-15 Family Team Updates
- 15 Youth Team Updates
- 16 Family Water Safety
- 17 Heat Safety

18 GROWING OUR PEOPLE

- 18 Employment Opportunities
- 19-20 Local Training Opportunities

21 INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT

- 21 Newsletter Sign-Up
- 22 Contact Us

SCFSS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

CULTURE OF CARING

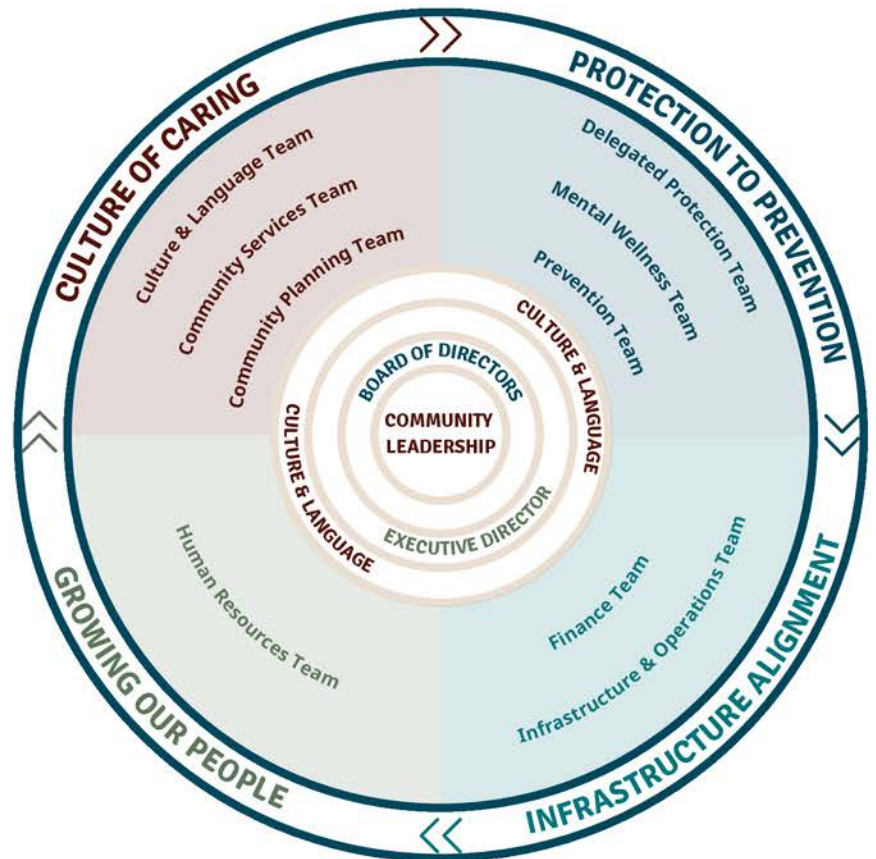
- Communicate with one voice
- Integrate language and traditional teachings into programs and services
- Grow caregiver networks in alignment with traditional and community values
- Incorporate learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Return rights and responsibilities to our people through the development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

JUNE 2025



SUNDAY 1

LNIB - SKATEBOARDING

UNB - SPIRIT OF THE SYILX UNITY RUN

8

LNIB - SKATEBOARDING

15

LNIB - SKATEBOARDING

22

LNIB - SKATEBOARDING

29

LNIB - SKATEBOARDING

MONDAY 2

CIB - GIRL'S GROUP

9

SIB - WELLNESS CIRCLE

CIB - GIRL'S GROUP

16

SIB - FATHER'S DAY DINNER

SCF - WOMEN'S GROUP 5-8PM @KLC GYM

CIB - GIRL'S GROUP

23

SIB - DROP-IN

CIB - GIRL'S GROUP

30

CIB - GIRL'S GROUP

TUESDAY 3

CIB - WOMEN'S GROUP

NIB - DRUM NIGHT

SIB - COFFEE W/ A COP

CIB - KID'S GYM NIGHT

10

CIB - ELDERS TEA

NIB - DRUM NIGHT

SIB - COMMUNITY BBQ

CIB - COMMUNITY AWARDS CELEBRATION

17

SIB - DROP-IN

CIB - WOMEN'S GROUP

NIB - DRUM NIGHT

CIB - KID'S GYM NIGHT

24

NIB - DRUM NIGHT

CIB - KID'S GYM NIGHT

1

- 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

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



WEDNESDAY

4

SD58 - INDIGENOUS GRAD CEREMONY

LNIB - WOMEN'S WALKING GROUP

11

UNB - VOLLEYBALL NIGHTS

SIB - DESERT HILLS TRIP

LNIB - WOMEN'S WALKING GROUP

18

UNB - VOLLEYBALL NIGHTS

SCF - AWAKENING OUR CANOE CEREMONY

LNIB - WOMEN'S WALKING GROUP

25

LNIB - WOMEN'S GROUP STEIN VALLEY HIKE

UNB - VOLLEYBALL NIGHTS

2

THURSDAY

5

NIB - HEALTH TALK

NIB - GIRL'S GROUP

CIB - AFTER SCHOOL DROP-IN

12

SCF - FEEL THE BEAT

SIB - CANNING WORKSHOP

NIB - GIRL'S GROUP

CIB - AFTER SCHOOL DROP-IN

19

SIB - BURIAL CEREMONY

NIB - GIRL'S GROUP

CIB - AFTER SCHOOL DROP-IN

26

SIB - GATHERING

SD58 - LAST DAY OF CLASSES

NIB - GIRL'S GROUP

CIB - AFTER SCHOOL DROP-IN

3

FRIDAY

6

SIB - ELDER'S LUNCHEON

NOO/SHA- YOUTH SWIM

13

LNIB - YARD CLEAN-UP

UNB - FAMILY GOLF DAY

SIB - WALKING CLUB

NOO/SHA- YOUTH SWIM

20

SCFSS - OFFICE CLOSURE

CIB - CULTURE CAMP

NOO/SHA- YOUTH SWIM

27

SD58 - ADMIN DAY SCHOOLS CLOSED

SIB - WATER PARK DAY TRIP

NOO/SHA- YOUTH SWIM

4

SATURDAY

7

SCF - MEN'S GROUP

14

UNB - INDIGENOUS DAY CELEBRATION

CIB - WOMEN'S GROUP

UNB - SIYA PLACE COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE

21

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAYS

CIB - CULTURE CAMP

UNB - INDIGENOUS DAY CELEBRATION

28

5

Shackan:

- After School Drop In (ages 6+) | SCHSS Satelite Office | Tuesday | 3:45-5pm
- Drum Nights | Nooaitch Band Hall | Tuesday | 5-7pm
- Gym Night (ages 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

UNB:

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

Legend:

- Event Name | Location | Day | Time

CULTURE & LANGUAGE TEAM UPDATES - MAY

FIR BOUGH BATH

Our culture team has been busy this month supporting many of our team members through various cultural teachings in preparation for the Calling Our Spirits Home Ceremony. Barb led teachings of Fir bough bath with the community team. She guided the team through washing and cleansing their spirits in preparation for being strong support people throughout the community walk.

The team also went to the water to wash off any emotions that they needed to let go of to get into a good mind space to go forward in a good way.

FEEL THE BEAT

This month the participants worked on regalia; many are continuing with projects they started. There has been a good turnout for these events. We welcome you to attend and bring projects that you would like to work on even if it is not the main project that is planned for. We offer assistance and guidance while you work on special traditional projects. We provide a meal and meeting place to get together for a good visit and connection to our traditional roots.

On the 1st there were two young ladies that made shawls for their graduation ceremony.

On the 15th we had a young man who is an urban Metis who learned how to sew a ribbon shirt.

One young lady was dropped off to learn about her culture independently and attended two of our Feel The Beat workshops, where she learned to sew a ribbon skirt. She completed her project within those two sessions. We are so proud to see our young people gaining interest in these types of activities; it really helps ground them in our culture and teaches skills that they can carry with them for a lifetime. The most important teaching we can share is that culture is healing, and practicing our culture helps connect you to your inner self.

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST ELDERS

Our Resident Elder team has grown to include two LNIB elders, Mary June Coutlee and Jimmy Isaac. We welcome to the team and look forward

to the knowledge, wisdom and laughter they will bring to the team.

Mary June has positive happy energy and shares that with all who interact with her. Some of Mary June's favourite activities include working on hides, traveling, playing baseball and curling. She loves to learn new craft activities and maintains her knowledge by practicing her traditional crafts.

One of Mary June's hopes for our community is that each person feels empowered from within, without relying on artificial means. She wants everyone to recognize their inner strength—God gave us all a backbone so we wouldn't be like jellyfish, and so that we can walk through life with courage and resilience. Mary June looks forward to being able to share from her life experiences and hopes to add to the existence of others, this will make her feel like she has done well.

Jimmy "Gabby" Isaac brings an approachable and wise soul to the team. He is always ready with a joke that helps people feel comfortable to chat. He is proud to know his language n̄e?k̄épmxcin and looks forward to practicing this more with his fellow elders. In previous roles he would speak in n̄e?k̄épmxcin to help encourage others to learn even a bit of the language. Some of Jimmy's favourite activities include going out into the woods to gather and harvest, he loves fishing and bowling in the winter. He loves to travel with his granddaughter. Jimmy also played men's fast ball for about 30 years!

With graduation season upon us and 64 Indigenous graduates being honored by this milestone, we invited our new Elders to begin their journey with SCFSS by offering words of wisdom to the graduates—guidance rooted in tradition, strength, and hope for the path ahead. Mary June shares "Always spread your wings, you have so many choices throughout your lifetime - never stick with just one choice. Don't build your own cage, explore all your options out there."



Barbara Huston, Culture Coordinator



CULTURE & LANGUAGE TEAM UPDATES - MAY

A message from Jimmy to the graduates, "Continue your education, find a nice job and become independent." One of Jimmy's hopes for the community is that our people reconnect with our language and traditional values. As we begin to lose more of our elders—the ones we've practiced with and learned from—it's more important than ever to take the time to sit with them now, and learn what we can, while we still can.

We also send heartfelt thanks to our Elder Nettie Earnst, who has decided to enjoy her retirement with family. We are grateful to have worked with her and have her as a part of our work family. We wish her many happy adventures and appreciate all the wisdom and teachings she contributed to our teams. She guided us in understanding how to approach our work with respect and integrity, ensuring that everything we do is carried out in a good way

CALLING OUR SPIRITS HOME

Our Culture and Language Team provided supports during the "Calling Our Spirits Home" Ceremony. Some of the ways the team supported were medicine making with the Community Team, where we made pain lotion, Epsom salt foot soak, Devils Club/Horsetail salve, and provided Red Ochre. Our Culture Team participated and witnessed the Coldwater community as they walked - starting their healing process, for many of Coldwater's residential school survivors and their families have experienced the residual effects of residential school.

One of the accomplishments that we found so powerful was the walk of some of our elders who walked 9 kilometers into the community. The elders shared that they really needed to take their part in walking to do their own healing. We are so proud and humbled to see the determination of these beautiful elders, we are so proud of how dedicated they were in getting through those last kilometers. We witnessed how difficult it was physically and emotionally, but they all pushed through. This was incredibly uplifting, they really called on their inner strength and their spirits to bring

them home, to witness each person support each other through those final steps was such an honour. We lift our hands up to all the participants and organizers who helped make this happen and to our elders who really put in the heart work who led by example the true power of this healing ceremony and how it can truly transform our people when you commit to your healing journey.















Barbara Huston, Culture Coordinator



June Vocabulary

June is here, bringing with it the warmth and brightness of early summer. This month is known as ksmukáXəntn, or the Time of the Sunflower—a season when the earth stretches awake, blossoms open, and the land begins to glow with life. As the sun lingers longer in the sky, it's a time to gather, explore, and enjoy the gifts of the land.

Whether you're setting up camp beneath the stars, casting a fishing rod into a quiet lake, or wandering down a sun-dappled trail, these early summer days invite us to slow down and savor the season. Here are a few words that speak to the spirit of Summer and the many ways we connect with nature during this vibrant time.

		
Summer	spénck	scaʔáq ^w
		
Camp	ǰiʔmínʰ	sn'caʔáq ^w tn'
		
Fishing Rod	kətnímtn	stq'aq'it'aʔtn
		
Trail	xuʔxwét	n'qəql'x ^w áqaʔs



COMMUNITY SERVICES TEAM UPDATES - MAY

ON THE LAND WITH THE CULTURE TEAM - MAY 14, 2025

On May 14th, the Elders Coordinator from LNIB, along with three LNIB Elders, joined the SCFSS Culture Team for a full day of harvesting on the land.

This meaningful gathering was inspired by a request made during SCFSS's Elder Recruitment Dinner, where an Elder expressed interest in participating in the Culture Team's activities throughout the year.

Thanks to the strong connections our Community Team maintains with our communities, we were able to coordinate this opportunity. They helped connect community members with the Culture Team, arranged transportation for the Elders, and participated in the day's teachings. Together, the group engaged in learning about the land, traditional medicines, plants, and foods.

We had 17 people participate including Resident Elders, Culture Coordinators, Culture Admin Staff, Traditional Counselor, Community Member, LNIB Elders, LNIB Elders Coordinator, Community Prevention Worker, Guide to the Land.



*Jalissa Weymouth,
Community Prevention Worker*

LNIB MMIW WALK - MAY 7, 2025

On a powerful day filled with unity, remembrance, and hope, over 100 community members gathered at the Lower Nicola Band Hall, dressed in red, to take part in the MMIW (Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women) Walk. This heartfelt event brought together people of all ages, backgrounds, and communities from across Merritt and beyond, united in a shared mission: to raise awareness and honour the lives of Indigenous women who have been lost to violence.

The walk began with a moving prayer offered by students from the Lower Nicola Band School, grounding the event in tradition and the strength of the next generation. With flag bearers leading the way, the group made their way toward the Shulus Arbour.

Along the route, passing cars honked in solidarity, and the walkers felt the deep love and support of the community surrounding them.

Upon arriving at the arbour, the gathering transformed into a sacred space of storytelling, song, and shared grief. Elders from various communities offered their voices, sharing stories that carried both sorrow and resilience. Their words reminded everyone of the importance of keeping our children close, of holding space for grief, and of standing together to carry the heavy burden that so many families bear.

This walk was more than a journey from one place to another—it was a collective step toward healing, awareness, and action. It served as a reminder that the crisis of MMIW is not just a statistic, but a deeply personal and painful reality for many. Through this event, participants were able to connect, reflect, and reaffirm their commitment to justice and remembrance.

As the songs echoed through the arbour and the stories lingered in the air, one thing was clear: the spirit of those we've lost lives on in the strength of the community, in the voices of the youth, and in the hearts of all who walk in red.



*Sara Poole,
Communications Team Lead*





COMMUNITY PREVENTION TEAM UPDATES - MAY



CALLING OUR SPIRITS HOME CEREMONY MAY 22-25, 2025

From May 22 to 25, the Coldwater Band, with the support of Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society and many other local Indigenous organizations, hosted the Calling Our Spirits Home Ceremony—a sacred and emotional event to honour and call home the spirits of the children who never returned from the Kamloops Residential School.

The ceremony began with sacred fires lit at both the Kamloops Residential School and Coldwater. Elders walked through the silent halls of the school, their voices rising in prayer and song, gently calling the spirits of the children to return home. Over the next four days, walkers and runners of all ages carried those spirits 118 kilometers back to Coldwater, supported every step of the way by community members who lined the roads with love and encouragement.

More than 200 community members from across Merritt and surrounding areas took part in this powerful journey. Elders played a central role throughout the ceremony—offering traditional songs and prayers, sharing stories, and providing ochre to participants as a symbol of protection and connection. Each day was nourished not only by spirit, but also by body, with delicious meals prepared and served by local caterers. Traditional wellness practices were offered throughout the event, creating space for reflection, healing, and cultural reconnection.

SCFSS was honoured to support Coldwater's efforts in planning such a meaningful event. Lacey McRae Williams and Harmony Williams, both dedicated members of the planning committee, contributed over a year of thoughtful preparation to the Calling Our Spirits Home Ceremony. SCFSS also donated staffing, venues, t-shirts, and a blanket for every Coldwater community member—gifts offered with deep respect and solidarity.

This ceremony was a testament to the strength and unity of our communities. It reminded us that when we come together—with purpose, compassion, and respect—we can carry even the heaviest burdens. We can honour the past, support one another in the present, and walk together toward a future rooted in truth, healing, and love.

The spirits of the children were not forgotten. They were carried home—with every step, every song, and every heartbeat.



Sara Poole,
Communications Team Lead



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

Indigenous Stories as Law

Adapted from ilru.ca

WHAT IS LAW?

Law is more than a set of rules, it is about the principles and processes that guide collective decision making. Law requires people to deliberate, reason, interpret and debate these principles and processes to address the challenges in their communities. This is how large groups of people collectively govern themselves.

Law does not interpret itself; people interpret law (informed by their own experiences and beliefs) and then apply law to human problems. The different interpretations result in different conclusions about the meaning of laws. Law then becomes the collective process to work through these differences. For law to apply collectively, it has to be interpreted collectively to include diversity of opinions.

Indigenous laws come from ongoing, living traditions. They are shaped by the land, history, language, and values of each Indigenous community. Indigenous law must be taken seriously as law so that it can do the necessary and hard work of law—collectively solving problems, governing, and managing conflict.

INDIGENOUS LEGAL TRADITIONS

Indigenous legal traditions include the full scope of law (legal principles, procedures, responses, and governance processes) of a particular community or nation. They include the organization and processes of law (institutions, dispute-resolution and decision-making systems). They also includes a collective memory of how people solved legal problems in the past (referred to as legal precedent).

No legal system is perfect, and it doesn't need to be for people to govern themselves. For generations, Indigenous peoples have used their legal traditions to collaboratively solve problems and handle conflicts. They've also adapted their laws in order to deal with the challenges of their time. Indigenous laws are not just part of the past - they are living, evolving, and actively practiced today. However, colonization has greatly affected Indigenous laws and in some places, Indigenous law might not be visible or fully functioning today. It is not only possible, but essential to rebuild these systems.



Indigenous peoples are diverse and their laws flow from many sources. Understanding their communities' legal foundations can lead to a better understanding of their contemporary potential, including how they might be recognized, interpreted, enforced, and implemented.

-Dr. John Borrows, Canada's Indigenous Constitution



JURISDICTION JOURNEYS



HOW CAN A STORY BE LAW?

Just like a written law or piece of legislation, a story can express, pass on, and encourage adherence to a community's legal values. In Indigenous traditions, the purpose of repeating oral accounts of the past or telling stories is broader than that of written history in western societies. As explained by John Burrows, "law can sometimes, from a First Nations' perspective, be literally written on the earth. That is, there are cases like stories that are attached to different animals, plants, ecological formations, and in those stories as they're told ... people see precedent, they see authority, they see criteria, they see guidelines, they see measurements for regulation and making decisions."

Indigenous laws are carried in oral histories, stories, ceremonies, songs, dances, and practices. These forms of law were traditionally public and accessible to everyone—not just judges or lawyers. This meant that Indigenous law belonged to everyone and everyone was responsible for it because everyone was taught the stories.

As tools for legal thinking, stories can act as an entry point to help explain important teachings and build understanding, especially for those unfamiliar with these legal traditions. Oral stories are not readily recognized as law by the colonial system, but a method has been developed by Friedland and Napoleon to draw law out of the stories and format them into a "modified case brief model" that aligns with colonial law interpretation - and has been used by various nations. However, it is important to recognize story analysis on its own cannot provide a whole picture of an Indigenous legal tradition or society.

“

captikʷł (oral stories) is our governance instructions that are mandated by our Acmiscut Chiefs (Knowledge Keepers) to ensure that the right actions are required as a responsibility to our worldview of our "Inherent Rights". These instructions, characteristics, and ethos are shown in our captikʷł ceremonial display, in public rituals, in nsyilxcan (our language) interpretive process, and in the direct exercises of practice and interests (occupation and use) that connect us to the whole of the tm'xwúlaʔxw (land and interconnectedness of all living things). The captikʷł ethics are the cornerstone for achieving equity maxims on government-to-government relationships.

-captikʷł Ethic Agreement between UNB and SCFSS

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

This explanation is an adaptation of the work published by the Indigenous Law Research Unit at the University of Victoria. To learn more about Indigenous Law, go to <https://ilru.ca/publications/> or look into some of John Burrows published works.

This information has been adapted from

- https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/NI%C8%BDTUO_Toolkit.pdf
- <https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/What-is-Indigenous-Law-Val-.pdf>
- <https://ilru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Reflective-Frameworks-Article-Friedland.pdf>



Compiled by Stephanie Tourand, Community Planner



NICOLA CANOE PULL - JULY 15-17, 2025

The Nicola Canoe Pull is an annual event in Merritt, British Columbia, that brings together Indigenous youth, the RCMP, and various community organizations to strengthen relationships and celebrate cultural traditions. Participants paddle together in canoes, fostering teamwork, leadership, and connection to the land and water. The event also includes cultural teachings and support from local elders, ensuring that traditional protocols and knowledge are honored throughout the experience.

NICOLA CANOE PULL 2025

The Merritt First Nations Policing Section (RCMP) is planning its Annual Canoe Journey for the Nicola Valley. Our goal is to help build positive community relationships with the RCMP and surrounding aboriginal communities, the various organizations and the youth. The event will be held July 15-17, 2025. Tuesday will have an arrival time of 2pm, with dinner being served. Youth will camp Tuesday and Wednesday night at the Douglas Lake Camp site (located at the Old Kamloops Sailing club—Quilchena, BC).

Our vision is to support the future leaders of the Nicola Valley in a healthy active environment by supporting youth, being respectful, demonstrating cultural awareness, working together and having fun. This is being planned in partnership with TECK (Highland Valley Copper). With the planning assistance of Scw'exmx Community Health, Upper Nicola Indian Band, Lower Nicola Indian Band, Coldwater Indian Band, Nooiatch Indian Band, Shackan Indian Band, Scw'exmx Child and Family, Nlaka'pamux Health and School District #58.

It will be held July 15-17, 2025. This event is for youth between the ages of 10 and 18 years. If you have any questions or wish to help, please contact Cpl Jason OLNEY, Cst. Tammy DENNING, Cst. Derek VERSTEEG or Cst John RYAN at the Merritt Detachment at 250-378-4262.

WAIVER HERE



The committee has been actively meeting each month to plan the canoe pull. In anticipation of a possible algae bloom in the lake, we are proactively considering a backup plan to host the event in August. Of course, we're all hoping that this won't be necessary! We'll continue to provide updates, so be sure to follow our social media for the latest news.



FAMILY TEAM UPDATES - MAY

WOMEN'S GROUP FOUR FOOD CHIEFS - MAY 12, 2025

The participants for women's group were involved in a meaningful and inspiring presentation on the Four Food Chiefs, a traditional Indigenous teaching that explores the values of balance, respect, and interconnectedness through the wisdom of four key food figures: Bear, Saskatoon Berry, Salmon, and Bitterroot. This session highlighted how these chiefs represent different teachings and responsibilities, and how their stories can guide us in our personal and community lives.

This presentation included storytelling, cultural insights, and opportunities for reflection and discussion. It was a great chance to connect with others, deepen our understanding of Indigenous perspectives, and celebrate the strength and wisdom of women in community.

MENS GROUP SURVIVAL SKILLS - MAY 24, 2025

The SCFSS Men's Group recently hosted a powerful gathering at the Lower Nicola Band-owned Tunkwa Lake Resort. Over 25 men attended, participating in either a Survival Skills workshop led by Sakej Ward—a Mi'kmaw warrior from Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church First Nation)—or a sweat lodge ceremony facilitated by Daryle Shackelly.

We were honoured to welcome relations from Upper Nicola, Nooaitch, Lower Nicola, Shackan, Coldwater, and Urban. We also acknowledge that this event took place during Calling Our Spirits Home, and the Men's Group lifts their hands to all who supported residential school survivors during that time.

A heartfelt thank you goes to CNA and NHSS for generously providing door prizes—everyone went home with something! We're grateful to all the bands and community members who continue to support this initiative.

The overarching goal of the Men's Wellness Group is to create a safe and supportive space

for men to connect, share stories, and grow. Through engagement with leaders, mentors, and knowledge keepers, participants are offered opportunities to deepen their cultural knowledge and personal development. Workshops, circles, and networking help build confidence, develop new skills, and foster a sense of community. We encourage our male relations to bring peers along, helping to create an environment where we can learn from one another and grow together.

As part of the event, a sweat lodge was built at Tunkwa Lake. One of the conditions of using the site was that the lodge be dismantled afterward. This has inspired the men's group to begin networking within each band to find facilitators and locations to host sweats in their own communities. This will help strengthen cultural bonds and expand access to these important practices.

To learn about building a sweat lodge or to get involved, contact SCFSS and ask for the Men's Group Coordinator!



"It was a good day." – Tim Manuel

"Thanks for the invite." – Sakej Ward

Attendance Snapshot:

- 10 Lower Nicola Band members
- 9 Upper Nicola Band members
- 1 Shackan Band member
- 6 members from other bands
- Youngest participants: ages 6, 8, and 9
- Youth participants: ages 14 and 16
- Eldest participants: age 75

A photographer was present at this event, but due to timing the pictures will not be featured in this edition of the newsletter – however once they're received, we'll share them on the Coyote





MEN'S GROUP CONTINUED...

Brotherhood Facebook page! Be sure to follow us there for updates and future opportunities. We also invite you to join us for our next event: a hike through the Stein Valley on June 7th to view the historic pictographs.



SCF Facebook



Coyote Brotherhood Facebook

The Men's Group extends deep gratitude to all supporting organizations and First Nations bands who continue to stand behind this work. Together, we are building healthy nations—one family, one man, one woman, and one child at a time.
 Huṁneṭ, Way̓ - All my relations.



Jason Ermineskin,
 Men's Group
 Coordinator

YOUTH TEAM UPDATES - APRIL

CLC LUNCH & LEARN: FOCUSING ON SELF-CARE AND JOB READINESS

Youth Transition Worker, Candice, has continued to lead the CLC Lunch and Learn sessions every Thursday throughout the month. This month's focus was on self-care and job readiness, with youth engaging in activities that supported their personal well-being and future career goals. Participants explored different self-care strategies to help manage stress and maintain balance in their daily lives. Additionally, they learned how to build their own resumes and cover letters, gaining valuable skills that will support them in their job search and future employment opportunities. These sessions continue to provide youth with practical tools and meaningful learning in a supportive environment.

NVIT COOKING PROGRAM KICKS OFF WITH COMMUNITY FOCUS

This month, Youth Transition Worker, Candice, launched a new session of the NVIT Cooking Program with a group of enthusiastic youth! The program began with an orientation session where participants got to know the kitchen space, reviewed safety protocols, and began building confidence in their culinary skills.

The first recipe they tackled was a hearty beef stew, which they prepared together as a team. Each cooking day, the youth will be preparing and handing out 50+ meals to community members of their choice, creating a powerful opportunity to give back while developing practical life skills! This initiative not only teaches kitchen skills and teamwork but also builds a strong sense of community connection and service.

YOUTH TRANSITION COORDINATORS VISIT UBC WITH CLC LUNCH & LEARN GROUP

On May 14th, the Youth Transition Coordinators joined the CLC Lunch and Learn group for an enriching trip to Vancouver. The day included a guided tour of the University of British Columbia (UBC), where youth had the opportunity to explore post-secondary options and learn more about what pathways are available to them after high school.

Following the campus tour, the group visited the Indigenous Museum located on campus. This part of the trip offered valuable insights into Indigenous cultures and traditions, providing youth with a deeper understanding of heritage and history.

The experience was both educational and inspiring - helping connect future academic opportunities with cultural awareness and personal growth.

YOUTH VISIT TO WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS BASE

The Youth Transition Coordinators organized a visit for the youth from CLC to the Wildland Firefighters Base. During the visit, the group received a guided tour of the facility and engaged in informative discussions about career opportunities in wildland firefighting. The day concluded with a BBQ at the base, where youth had the chance to connect with the crew in a relaxed and welcoming environment.



Candice Dolman, Youth Transition Coordinator



SPLASH SMART: STAY SAFE, STAY STRONG

We are blessed to live between two powerful rivers—sources of life, stories, and spirit. As we gather near the water this summer, let's carry the teachings of respect, responsibility, and care for one another.

1. Always Wear a Lifejacket

Just like we wear regalia with purpose, lifejackets protect us on the water. Make sure everyone—especially children and non-swimmers—has one that fits well, even near shallow water.

2. Watch Over the Little Ones

Children need our full attention near water. Keep them close—within arm's reach—and choose a responsible adult as a "Water Watcher" to give their full attention to supervising swimmers.

3. Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

Water is sacred. Alcohol and drugs don't belong in ceremony—or in water activities. Stay clear-headed to keep yourself and others safe.

4. Know Your Limits

Only swim where it's safe and familiar. If you can't swim 50 meters or tread water for a minute, stay close to shore and wear a personal floatation device. There's no shame in being honest about your ability—it's a strength.

5. Be Aware of Natural Water Hazards

Our rivers are alive. They can be cold, fast, and unpredictable. Stay away from dams, weirs, and strong currents. Listen to the land and water—they speak if we pay attention.

6. Protect Vulnerable Family Members

Children under 5 and men over 18 are most at risk of drowning. Support our Elders and those with health conditions too—everyone deserves to feel safe and included.

7. Respect Water Quality Advisories

If the water looks off—green, murky, or has a warning sign—stay out. Follow FNHA and local advisories. The land and water will tell us when it's not safe.

Let's honour the power of our rivers by keeping each other safe. Whether you're swimming, boating, or simply enjoying the shoreline, your choices can save lives.

Stay safe, stay aware—respect the water, protect our people.



*Heather Fairley,
Occupational Health & Safety Specialist*



HOT DAYS, COOL WAYS TO STAY SAFE

Stay safe during extreme heat events



As our climate changes, heat waves are becoming more common and more severe. High temperatures can be dangerous to our health. Here are six ways to stay safe.

Stay Cool



Close windows and curtains during the day and open them at night.



Seek cooler locations like shaded areas, basements, or air-conditioned buildings.



Apply ice packs and cool, damp cloths to your wrists and neck.

Take Care



Drink water, even when you don't feel thirsty.



Take it easy and avoid intense activities.



Check on others, especially those who live alone or are more at risk.

See the PreparedBC Extreme Heat Guide for more tips:



Know the signs of heat-related illness

Heat Exhaustion: heavy sweating, headache, muscle cramps, extreme thirst, and dark yellow pee.

Heat Stroke: high body temperature, confusion, dizziness/fainting, and flushed skin.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency; call 911.





EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society (SCFSS) is family-centered and guided by n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x 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 n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x communities, SCFSS prioritizes the hiring of n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x 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
- Operations Manager
- 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

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

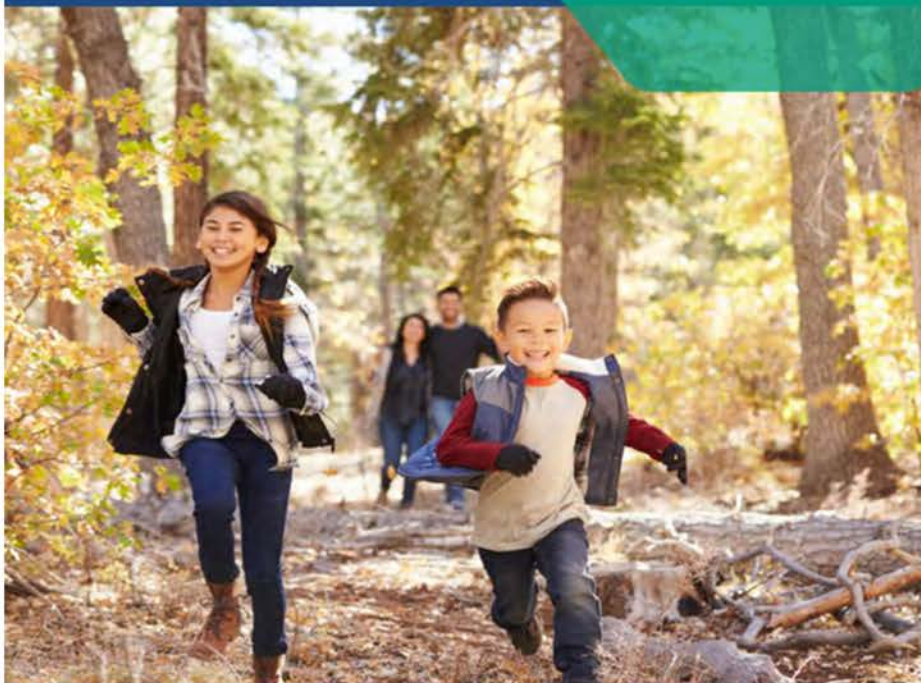


LOCAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



Healthy
Communities
Grants

APPLICATION
Guide
2025



Did you know that BC Healthy Communities PlanH Healthy Community Grants are available?

The goal of the PlanH Program is to support Indigenous and local governments, including health authorities, to advance policies, programs and strategies aimed at improving health equity, and well-being.

Applications are due by July 7, 2025.

Learn more here by visiting the application guide, scan the QR code for more info:



LOCAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

INDIGENOUS LAND STEWARDSHIP

A path to a meaningful career in land and resource stewardship based on Indigenous Peoples' laws & values

Contact us: admissions@necvancoouver.org www.necvancoouver.org



BC Public Service is now accepting applications!

Indigenous Youth Internship Program (IYIP)



\$59,015.56 annually

Start date: September 8, 2025
End date: August 31, 2026

Interested? Learn more and apply here:
GoToCareers.ca/IYIP



Experience NVIT

CONTACT NVIT FOR MORE INFO!

Trades Programs List

- Bridging to Trades
- Carpentry Level 1 & 2
- Culinary Arts Professional Cook Level 1 & 2
- Electrician Pre-Apprenticeship
- Residential Construction Foundations Program
- Welder Foundation
- Youth Explore Trades Sampler



Get that Bachelor of Education Degree closer to home

Seeking future teachers committed to Indigenous Education! The Bachelor of Education Degree program will be offered at NVIT in partnership with UBC this coming January 2026.

Prerequisite courses will be available at the Merritt Campus in Fall Term 2025.

Applicants must have completed a minimum of two years (60 credits) of post-secondary coursework, which must include:

- 6 credits in English Literature and Composition;
- 3 credits in Canadian Studies;
- 3 credits in a Laboratory Science;
- 3 credits in Mathematics (not statistics);
- 15 credits of upper-level coursework (300- or 400-level);
- 100 hours of practical experience working with age-appropriate students or youth.



Connect with an Academic Planner today!
bit.ly/NVIT-AFP

nvit.ca info@nvit.ca 1.877.682.3300

LAND GUARDIAN PROGRAM

What it's about

This is a fully funded training program by Indigenous Tourism BC. The Land Guardian Program addresses the growing demand for skilled and certified guardians employed within communities. This five-week program integrates engaging lectures, applied field training, realistic case studies, scenarios, and exercises to build practical skills, technical knowledge, and enhance analytical and critical thinking abilities.

This program prepares you for entry-level roles such as Land Guardians, Watchmen, Environmental Monitors, Environmental Technicians, and other land management positions. These live online classes under the guidance of experienced NRTG instructors cover 5 weeks. Each day consists of morning online sessions with an instructor, followed by an afternoon of completing instructor-guided field exercises in your area and debriefing sessions.

Online hybrid training, Monday to Friday, May 26th to June 27th, 2025

Upon Successful completion of the program, graduates will be able to:

1. Apply observe, record, report, and protect skills required by land guardians.
2. Monitor and assess soils, plants, aquatic conditions, and wildlife.
3. Interpret information to contribute to the management of the environment.
4. Participate in environmental protection in your territory.

Request now to be part of this training!

[registration link](#)

DELIVERED BY
NATURAL
RESOURCES
TRAINING GROUP

Requirements for the course are:

- Electronic Device with stable Wi-Fi connection
- Appropriate clothing for weather

Eligibility:

- Indigenous Peoples Residing in BC
- Indigenous-owned tourism businesses (51%+ Indigenous ownership), and employees of
- First Nations-owned tourism businesses (51%+ First Nations ownership), and employees of

FOR MORE INFORMATION

training@indigenoussc.com
or
Jamie@indigenoussc.com

For Assistance to Attend

reception.education@lnib.net



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 / facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily / 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

Facebook Page: facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily



Healthy Children



Healthy Communities



Healthy Families