



Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children & Family Services Society



Annual Report 2018 - 2019

Létsé mót té sqwálewel ...

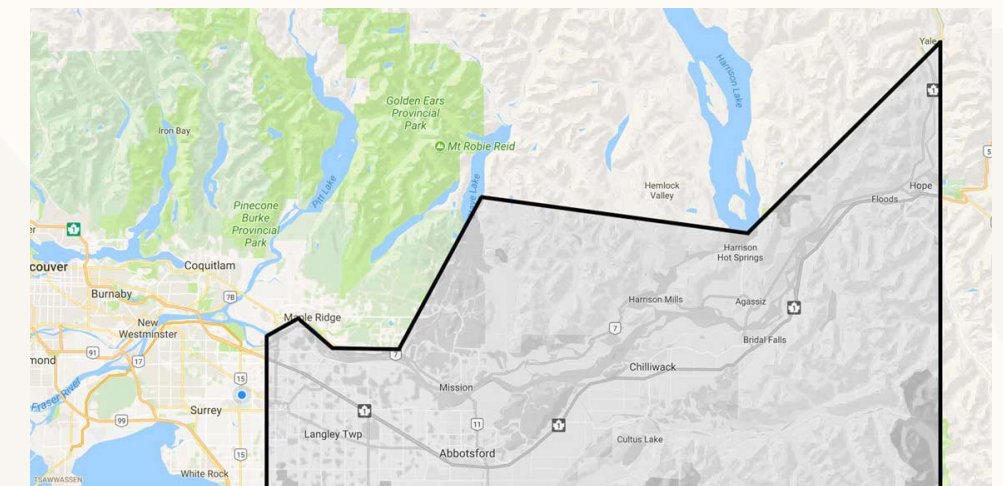
With a good mind, a good heart, and good feelings

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Our Geographic Service Area

Our Geographic Service Area (GSA) covers Yale to the East, Langley/Surrey Ministry Fraser Region boundary on the West (196th Street), Maple Ridge/Mission Ministry Fraser Region boundary on the North (Wilson Street) and the Canadian/US border to the South, including the Reserves of Member First Nations, and does not include the Reserves of non-Member First Nations, as set out in the map.



Message from the Board of Directors President



In 2018-2019, we had a productive time during what was a year of tremendous growth for the Agency. Here are some highlights:

The Board worked with four broad goals. Below are some of the highlights:

1) Continuing to improve Board Governance through development of policies and processes.

Accomplishments included updating the Board Governance manual, Board Governance training, and updating the Nominations Committee protocols and tools.

2) Developing processes for operations oversight and maintaining our relationship with

the executive leadership team. This past spring we restructured the Executive Leadership Team to a more collaborative model consisting of an Executive Director, a Director of Practice and a Director of Administrative Services. We appointed to the two latter positions and will be resuming our search for an Executive Director to make the Executive Leadership Team complete. To date, the new leadership structure has proven to be very successful.

3) Strengthening board visibility through improved communications about the work of the board.

In 2018-2019 we made several presentations to our community partners, and held a Social Work Practice Forum in January for our stakeholders to discuss what kinds of support services and programs are needed in our communities. The feedback informed the Service Delivery Revitalization model which we are moving to this fall (see article on page xx).

We also created a Board of Director's page on our website, distributed our Vision and Mission to all the offices, published a quarterly newsletter, and are

now on social media.

4) Enhancing the role of culture in the work of the board.

We held several honourings in 2018-2019 - in the spring of 2018 we honoured the executive leadership team of Rod Spitzig and Nazeem Ratanshi; in the summer we honoured the work of Agency staff; and in the fall of 2018 we honoured the work of our Elders Advisory Committee. We will continue to expand the use of Halq'eméylem language in our work.

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank our staff and Elders for their hard work and dedication and ensuring continual support to our children and families. We are also indebted to our community partners who work alongside us for the benefit of children and families in the Fraser Valley.

All my relations,

Marion Mussell
Board President

Message from the Director of Practice



I was pleased to accept the position of Director of Practice his past spring.

This is an exciting time for the Agency. With increased funding from the federal government, we are now able to move to a service delivery model that will increase supports on reserve, lessen case-loads and increase our focus on family strengthening and preservation. We have also created a team dedicated to providing wrap-around services to youth, age 13 plus.

As an Aboriginal organization, taking care of Aboriginal children, we need to not just meet the standards, but exceed them. This means ensuring a holistic approach

to working with individuals, focusing on physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing of the people we serve.

Fortunately we have staff who are passionate about what they do. I have been incredibly impressed with the enthusiastic approach to adapting to change, the innovative ideas and problem solving, and especially the dedication and passion staff bring to their work.

All my relations,

Kyla Darby

Message from the Director of Administrative Services



I am honored to be given the opportunity of being the Director of Administrative Service by the FVACFSS Board of Directors and to work with all the Indigenous children and families living within the xaxa temexw te Stol:lo.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for all of their support and leadership in continuing to always make FVACFSS a better Agency. I would like to also thank the staff, supervisors, team leaders and managers for their dedication, commitment, and hard work.

The Director of Administrative Services oversees the Finance, Administration, Human Resources and Training departments. Some of the highlights in 2018-19 where:

- 1)Ratification of a collective agreement with the BCGEU.
- 2)Increase in Federal Prevention Funding.
- 3)Transition to the BC Public

Service Pension Plan..

For the 2019-20 fiscal year some of the priorities are:

- 1)Employee Performance Management.
- 2)Administrative Review to support the Service Delivery Revitalization.
- 3)Review of the payroll system.
- 4)Review of the training priorities.
- 5)Update facilities plan to meet the growing staff numbers.
- 6)Update policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

Rod Spitzig

Our Vision and Mission

Vision

“We advance our inherent right to provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment for all our Indigenous children and families living within our xáxá témexw té Stó:lō.”

Mission

“We endeavor to ensure the safety and well-being of children by working with and supporting all Indigenous families while respecting their cultural diversity.”

Core Values

Honour

We honour generations of diverse traditions and cultures.

Engage

We engage and foster safe family ties and cultural connections in the best interests of the child.

Accountable

We are accountable to children, families, communities, stakeholders and each other.

Respect

We respect our roots in xáxá témexw té Stó:lō and endeavor to provide services and programs that meet the unique cultural needs of all Indigenous people.

Trust

We trust in the ability of our children and families to grow and develop in a healthy way.



**Létsé mót té
sqwálewel “**

*With a good mind, a
good heart, and good
feelings*

Our Elders



*Standing: Mary Malloway, Violet George, Julie George, Arlene Heese, Roger Andrews
Sitting: Rosemary Treherne, Barb Silver, Mona Sepass, Myra Sam, Yvonne Joe
Missing: Betty Paul, Amy Victor, Hazel Gludo*

FVACFSS has an Elders Advisory Committee of 12 Elders representing various First Nations Bands in the Stó:lō territory as well as some urban Elders. They ensure we are delivering services in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way.

They meet with social workers and their clients to give recommendations on how the social workers and families can support the children and families in a culturally sensitive way. In 2018 -2019 the Elders listened to and provided counsel on approximately 50 cases.

The Elders also provide advice to FVACFSS’s Board of Directors on issues related to governance and in June 2018 the Board showed their appreciation by holding an honouring ceremony at Squiala First Nation.

In December of 2018, Myra Sam, passed away. We will miss her gentle wisdom and kindness.



*Elders Retreat, Harrison Hot Springs,
June 2018*



Elders Honouring Ceremony, June 2018

Vision & Voices: Our Youth Advisory Committee



The Vision & Voices Youth Advisory Committee organized a bowling tournament in March, 2019.



Artwork by Anthony Gabriel

The Visions and Voices Youth Mentorship Program was established six years ago for youth ages 13 and older who have been in care or previously in care with our Agency. We believe it is critically important for these youth to be proud of their Indigenous heritage and culture. We also believe that by investing in their leadership capacity we can provide them with skills to be leaders in their communities and role models for other Indigenous youth.

The youth travel from across the Fraser Valley to meet monthly in Abbotsford. During these meetings, they share a meal, and plan and organize the Vision and Voices Forum, a two-day forum in the fall. Last year over 100 people attended the forum. A FVACFSS Program Coordinator and four Community Engagement Workers help lead and guide the group.

During these meetings the youth build skills around leadership as well as connect with their culture through Indigenous arts, crafts and language. The group also acts as an advisory committee for the Agency, ensuring our programs are responsive to their needs. Their feedback and ideas help the agency develop plans on how to improve services that impact them.

Our Organization, Our People

Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society (FVACFSS) is a fully delegated Aboriginal child welfare agency providing culturally appropriate and holistic services through prevention, community development and child welfare programs to Aboriginal (Status, Non-Status, On Reserve, Off Reserve, Stó:lō and other First Nation, Inuit, and Métis) children, youth and their families residing throughout the Fraser Valley.

Our programs and services are created and executed with a special attention on strengthening culture and identity. We focus on keeping families together, reintegrating children back with their families, and discovering and strengthening cultural connections.

FVACFSS operates with offices located in Agassiz, Chilliwack (our head office), Mission, Abbotsford, Langley and Surrey. In 2018-2019 we had 230 staff located throughout the Fraser Valley. While the vast majority of the staff are social workers, we also employ professionals in the areas of finance, human resources, communications and events, as well as traditional mentors, cultural connections and community engagement.

We work with 18 First Nations Bands – Atchelitz, Chawathil, Cheam, Kwantlen, Leq'amel, Matsqui, Popkum, Shxwh:y, Shxw'ow'hamel, Skawahlook, Skowkale, Skwah, Soowahlie, Squiala, Sumas Tzeachten, Yakwekwioose, Yale. We also work with urban, away from home, families. In fact, urban, off reserve families account for 90 per cent of our clients.

Training/Professional Development

As a Designated Aboriginal Agency, we sign off on the child welfare specialization certification for social workers. In 2018-2019, 24 social workers achieved delegated status with our agency. In addition, we offered training, in collaboration with our community partners. We offered approximately 40 training sessions on some of the following topics:

- Naloxone and Drug Awareness
- Trial Preparation



Elder and cultural mentor, Herb Joe's ancestral name is T'xwelatse.

“It took years for people to get comfortable doing ceremonies again . . . The smokehouse traditions were considered the work of the devil, people feared the smokehouse and the drumming and singing. Since the resurgence, it has grown and now thousands of us practice this way of life, it's become an integral part of life for Stó:lō families . . . It speaks of people rediscovering their spirituality.”

- Cultural Competency and Awareness
- Suicide Prevention/Intervention and Postvention
- Car Seats for Children
- Queer Competency
- Concurrent Disorders
- Domestic Violence
- Adoptions Training
- Permanency Planning

BCGEU, Bargaining and Benefits

In 2018-2019 staff voted to ratify a framework with the BC Government Employees Union. The framework is based on the Aboriginal Services Agreement. The Collective Bargaining Agreement came into effect April 1, 2019 and includes 84 per cent of FVACFSS staff. This is based off of 236 current Active members. Of the 236, 198 are BCGEU members and 38 are exempt.

To support the provisions within the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Xyólheméylh tran-

sitioned to the Federation Association Benefit Plan to provide employees with employer paid comprehensive benefits.

Included in the collective agreement is the Early Intervention Program (EIP) which is a collaborative based program to support employees that are injured or ill return to work safely and timely. Through the employee referral program, once a regular full-time employee has been injured or ill for 5 scheduled consecutive working days, the employee is referred to Acclaim Disability Management Inc. to facilitate the program. Acclaim Disability Management Inc. includes a multi-disciplinary team that takes a holistic approach to case management. Their focus is on employee capabilities rather than limitations, improving the return to work (RTW) outcomes, and continual assessment of RTW possibilities to expedite the process. Their method is a practical model for managing claims.

In 2018-2019 status employees also voted to collectively participate in the Canadian Pension Plan. Before Xyólheméylh was a part of Sto:lo Nation Society, the status employees had a vote to determine if status employees should contribute to CPP.

The result of the vote was not to contribute to CPP. In addition to the CPP, Xyólheméylh was pleased to announce that a defined benefit pension plan was being offered through the Public Service Pension Plan. Effective September 1, 2018, employees are eligible for a lifetime monthly income for retirement.

When Xyólheméylh separated from Sto:lo Nation it was determined that all benefits should remain the same, so we continued the same practice of status employees not contributing to CPP. With 89 per cent of the vote in favour it was determined by the majority of the vote that all status employees would contribute to CPP.



Dan Ludeman was the first staff person at Xyólheméylh. In fact, in 1993, the elders gave him the name of Xyólheméylh. "Xyólheméylh," is a Halq'emeylem word that was given to us that describes the special relationship between someone who requires care, and someone who provides care. It describes a relationship based on CARING, RESPECT and LOVE. Dan still works with Xyólheméylh as a consultant, most recently designing and engaging with the bands we serve and our community partners on the new service delivery model. See the article on page xx for more information on the new model.

Our Programs

Family Strengthening

We work collaboratively with families and communities to develop strategies in problem-solving, life skills, conflict resolution, and to develop or enhance parenting skills. FVACFSS facilitates and makes appropriate referrals to other services families may require, including but not limited to:

- Sexual Abuse Intervention Program
- Therapy
- Wellness Circles
- Parent Support Groups
- Alcohol and Drug Services

Our programs are designed and executed with special attention to strengthening culture and identity and keeping families together.

Cultural Camps and Forums

- 64 people participated in our Family Camp to build on traditional/cultural practices and build positive identity and resolve conflict.
- 25 youth participated in cultural ceremonies as they transitioned from boys to manhood and girls to womanhood during our Natural Changes/Warrior Camp.
- Approximately 100 people participated in our annual Family Forum held in the Fall which is designed to build capacity of families and support community members.

Youth Programs

Preparing youth to transition to out-of-care is crucial to their success. In 2018-2019 we:

- Organized several youth day camps which included fun activities and cultural programming.
- We supported the Vision and Voices Youth Conference which engages up to 100 youth.



Arnie Leon and son perform at Family Forum



FVACFSS staff Lynn Barisoff, Natalie Brandon and Cyndi Martinson at Family Forum.



Family Camp, 2018.



Warrior Camp, 2018.



Canoe Camp, 2018.



Youth Spring Camp, 2019.



FVACFSS staff Raven Little, Kyla Darby with Speaker and MLA, Darryl Plecas, Minister Lisa Beare, and Board Chair Marion Mussell.

Life Skills and Supports for Families

We provide programs to support families and young parents with life skills and other supports to increase resiliency. This included:

- Tool Time helps youth ages 14-19 to learn tools for independence and building healthier relationships. This program was delivered six times and included over 50 participants.
- Using the medicine wheel and traditional approaches to enhance family wellness the Four Directions Parenting Program was delivered nine times to more than 50 participants
- We taught young parents how to prepare and share traditional foods as well as budgeting, diet and nutrition to approximately 70 participants
- We held Family Cultural Nights program to teach parenting skills as well as cultural education to approximately 125 people
- We delivered Wellness Circles which included therapeutic activities and traditional ceremonies/ practices to approximately 50 people

Grants for Family Strengthening Activities

In 2018-2019 we received several grants to support our cultural programming, including:

- The New Relationship Trust provided grants to support our youth and elder advisory committees.
- We received a \$15,000 grant from the Ted Rodgers Foundation to support programs for youth in Langley.
- We received an \$8,000 Giving Voice grant from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations to support cultural programming in Mission.
- We received a \$4,000 Community Resilience grant from the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture to support programming in Abbotsford.

Thank you to all our funders.

Supports for Permanency

The Agency represents 526 children in care. The following is a breakdown of their situations:

Children in care with family: 88
 Children in Voluntary or Temporary care: 162
 Children in Continuing Care: 276

It is our goal that the majority of children that are in care are with family. Our objective is to have better outcomes for children and families, and this means an increased focus on family strengthening and on permanency. Our permanency team is focused on finding family and getting increased community involvement on these cases. The following are some of our accomplishments for 2018 - 2019:

- We increased the number of First Nations homes by recruiting nine additional First Nations caregivers.
- We delivered Foster Parent Orientation programs to 12 caregivers.
- Developed caregiver support groups for all caregivers and held six group support sessions.
- We held a Caregiver Camp for 17 caregivers and hosted a Caregiver appreciation night.
- We completed 11 Permanency Plans for Children in Care.

For Children in Care family and cultural connections are crucial. In 2018-2019:

- We completed 76 Cultural Connections plans for Children in Care.
- We averaged approximately 100 Traditional Family Planning Meetings per month.
- We attended 37 events and homecomings.
- We made 138 new family member reconnections.
- Increased the number of families services through Family Development Response vs. Investigation.



The Smimeyáth Ceremony honours youth who are transitioning out of care. Also known as the Butterfly Ceremony, it celebrates the journey of life, rebirth and the beginning of a new chapter.

The butterfly symbolizes our ability to go through important changes in life with grace and lightness. Fifteen youth attended the moving ceremony on June 12 at the Sumas Longhouse.



Caregiver Appreciation Night, 2018. "Hopefully by the end of the evening you will see how much we appreciate you," said Herb Joe to the approximately 70 caregivers who attended.

On Reserve Files Count Team 1

First Nation		FS	CCO	YAG	IN	SR	OOC-FS	OOC-CS	VCA	TCO	EFP	Total
Kwantlen	SW 1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Leq'a:mel	SW 1	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	10
Matsqui	SW 1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sumas	SW 1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Shxwha:y Village	SW 2 & 3	1	14	1	1	3	3	6	0	1	0	30
Aitchelitz	SW 4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Soowahlie	SW 4	3	2	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	10
Squiala	SW 4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Skowkale	SW 5	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Tzeachten	SW 5	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Yakweak-wioose	SW 5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Files		8	23	3	16	4	4	7	0	4	0	69

On Reserve Files Count Team 2

First Nation		FS	CCO	YAG	IN	SR	OOC-FS	OOC-CS	VCA	TCO	EFP	Total
Skwah	SW 1	4	4	0	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	14
Cheam	SW 2 & 3	1	10	0	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	20
Popkum	SW 2 & 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chawathil	SW 4 & 5	5	11	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	25
	SW 4 & 5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Skawahlook	SW 4 & 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yale	SW 4 & 5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total Files		10	25	0	17	6	2	0	1	1	0	62

FS Family Services files
 CCO Continuing Custody children in Care
 YAG Youth Agreement
 IN Investigation
 SR Voluntary Service Request
 OOC-FS Out of Care Family Service
 OOC-CS Out of Care Child Services
 VCA Voluntary Care Agreement
 TCO Temporary Custody Orders
 EFP Extended Family Plan

Internal Audit

In preparation for the Agency's external audit by MCFD in spring 2019, the agency underwent an internal audit to assess compliance to case practice standards for all file types, including family development response (FDR), protection and voluntary family service files, guardianship files and resource files.

Two Quality Assurance practitioners audited approximately 1500 open files in the agency. The internal audit was expected to provide a measure of the current level of practice in relation to existing legislation and the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards and Indicators (AOPSI) and identification of the strengths and challenges facing the agency.

The goal was to use this information to increase and maintain 85 per cent compliance to practice standards, and develop best practices rooted in good case work. The findings identified strengths and challenges facing the Agency.

Strengths included:

- Strong cultural awareness among staff;
- Dedicated workers who are committed to the work and prioritize field work.
- Resource workers are dedicated to seeing their caregivers every 90 days;
- The quality of care plans are exceptional;
- The use of traditional family planning meetings is consistently utilized;

Challenges included:

- The agency serves a large geographic area and teams are set up geographically which leads to less equity in various communities;
- Although guardianship workers are dedicated to seeing their

Christmas Spirit



L-R: Robin Kleiss, Sonya Halper

In 2018 - 2019 Xyólheméylh held two Christmas parties in Abbotsford and Chilliwack. Approximately 500 adults, youth and children attended. With the help of donations to the Agency, we were also able to deliver 70 Christmas hampers to families in need. Thanks to all our staff, partners, religious communities and friends in the communities we serve for their generosity in helping to make the drive a success this year.

(continued from page 13)

- children and youth in care on a monthly basis, high caseloads often hinder their ability to do this;
- New staff who are not delegated are assigned demanding family service and guardianship caseloads.

Recommendations included:

- The agency would be better able to support staff in developing strong clinical skills if they had a mentorship program for all new hires;
- Moving to a functional model of work, rather than geographical division of the work would create more equitable teams and allow team leaders to focus on one area of the work;
- Upgrading technology;
- Additional training.
- Lowering caseloads.

Community as Teacher, Our Partnership with UBC



Left-to-Right: UBC students Ellen Jopling, Kirsten Larsen, Caitlin Leahy

During the summer approximately 25 UBC students studying in the health professions participated in our summer camps to learn about the Stó:lō people through drumming, singing, canoeing, Longhouse ceremonies, talking with Elders and interacting with youth. The award winning program, Community as Teacher, started in 2006 and provides cross cultural learning opportunities for UBC health profession students to attend summer camps.

Attending the Family Camp at Kwantlen First Nation in August were Ellen Jopling, who is studying clinical psychology at UBC, and Kirsten Larsen and Caitlin Leahy, both nursing students at UBC.

“My research and clinical interests lie in depression, anxiety and trauma related disorders in youth,” said Ellen, who wants to work with populations in northern BC. “Any effort that future health care practitioners can make to become more culturally competent, respectful and understanding will only further our ability to help those in our communities wherever we work.”

Looking Ahead ... Service Delivery Revitalization

We’re embarking on a new chapter as an Agency and introducing a new service delivery model we’re very excited about.

For many years Stó:lō First Nations have been asking for dedicated resources for families on reserve. We made a proposal for additional funding for prevention services to the federal government and it was approved, which allows us to finally fulfill this need. This, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement, has led to a major overhaul of how we deliver services for those on reserve as well as those away from home.

In addition to creating a team dedicated to the 18 First Nations bands we serve and physically placing staff in those communities, we are also creating a screening team and teams dedicated to serving youth and families with youth ages 13 to 19, particularly those at risk and those transitioning out of care.

Our objective is to have better outcomes for children and families, and this means an increased focus on family strengthening and on permanency.

How we got here

Eighteen months ago the creation of a second Permanency Team was approved. This decision was based on the need to increase the agency’s capacity and effectiveness in finding permanent placement for its high number of children in care.

There was also approval to develop a specialized High Risk Youth Team, in response to a recommendation by the Representative of Children and Youth. The implementation of these decisions has been delayed due to the need to reconfigure caseloads.

We also conducted a comprehensive audit and file review and identified areas for improvement and a need for more consistency - see the article on the previous page about the Internal Audit.

What it will look like ...

We are moving from a geographic model to a functional model. There will now be five “baskets” of service:



In January 2019, approximately 50 community partners attended a Social Work Practice Forum to tell us what their community needs are, what kinds of support services and programs the community needs. The discussion helped inform our new model.



FVACFSS staff, our community partners and caregivers had the opportunity to attend information sessions on Service Delivery Revitalization in the spring and summer of 2019.

Need help?
Call our Helpline:
1-866-851-4619
8:30 am - 4:30 pm

After Hours
1-800-663-9122

With the creation of a Screening Team, we now have a new screening number: 1-866-851-4619 / after hours: 1-800-663-9122 / Kids Helpline: 310-1234.

1. Stó:lō Teams with social workers located in the 18 communities we serve. These teams will work collaboratively with families on reserve to develop relationships and find solutions to problems.

2. Family Development Response and Screening Teams, which will be the first point of contact and will work collaboratively with families to address concerns and make referrals. This will also include a Family Strengthening and a Rapid Response Team.

3. Family Services Teams will work collaboratively with families on strengthening cultural connections, implementing clinical strategies to address family needs and connect them with services and programs. The team will focus on children 0 -12 years of age.

4. A Youth and Guardianship Teams will provide wrap around services to youth age 13-19, with a focus on connecting the youth with community and culture, family preservation, and increased supports for transitioning out of care, in addition a 0-12 guardianship team will continue to focus on permanency.

5. Residential Resource Teams

will focus on caregiver recruitment, out of care support, and establish a placement review process to address the high number of overcapacity and specialized contracted placements.

What are the Next Steps?

We are taking an incremental approach to the changes. We have consulted with our First Nations, and held a number of information sessions for staff, our community partners, and caregivers.

This summer we assigned staff, reviewed and assigned case-loads, and determined how best to use our administrative resources to support this new model.

We were also busy finding office space for staff in the Stó:lō communities.

Our goal is that there will be minimal disruption of services while this is happening. As we move forward, it's critical that we collaborate and have conversations with our external partners to make sure we're integrated and collectively and be able to achieve the best outcomes for the families we serve.



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www.facebook.com/Xyolhemeylh



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