



COWICHAN TRIBES
Child and Family Wellness
Legislation Project



Raising our children our Quw'utsun way

Reclaiming our inherent right to govern our child and family services

A group of people, including children in traditional Indigenous blankets, standing in front of a building. The children are wearing colorful, patterned blankets and headbands. A man in a black robe with a red sash is also visible. The background shows a modern building with large windows and some trees.

Grounded in our **snuw'uy'ulh** (teachings)

Our snuw'uy'ulh in practice

In this picture, Cowichan children are blanketed as part of a re-unification ceremony at the court house to honour bringing them home to their family and community.

In 2022, Lalum'utul' Smun'eem also worked with the families of youth in care to host naming ceremonies.

**We love our children and want
them to know who they are:
Quw'utsun mustimuhw**

A historic pathway forward for children and families



“This is our chance to bring us all back together and exercise jurisdiction in a way that reflects our teachings, our ways of being, and there’s compassion involved.”

– X’tli’li’ye
Chief Lydia Hwitsum



“It’s time that responsibility of looking after our children comes back. We had our own laws in the past where our Elders looked after our children, and the whole community looked after our children. It takes a community to raise a child.”

– Whulquletse
Albie Charlie

Change is needed

Quw’utsun smun’eem (children) are at the heart of our community. Our nation has always had strong laws and protocols to guide our families. Residential schools removed our children and tried to destroy our culture; today, colonial policies of the child and family system continue to harm and separate our families. We now have an opportunity to complete the work started by our Elders decades ago, to reclaim our inherent right to govern our child and family services.

Taking over jurisdiction

Quw’utsun youth belong with their families and community. Our Child & Family Wellness Legislation (Law) will ensure that our child and family services are fully governed by Cowichan Tribes. We will no longer fall under the authority of the province. We will have the necessary tools and resources to support families. Our Law and legal principles will help transform the lives of our citizens, ensuring a supportive environment for all children to thrive.

Services based on prevention

Our main objective is to keep families together and to end the practice of child removals. We will focus on prevention to promote stronger, healthier, and more resilient families, benefiting our community as a whole. By providing the supports that families need, in alignment with our snuw’uy’ulh (teachings), our prevention-based approach will help create a brighter future for all Quw’utsun citizens.

The path forward

We are developing agreements with Canada and BC to pave the way for our self-governance and to secure the necessary financial resources. While we still have much to learn, our nation has experience running child and family services and we believe Quw’utsun peoples are best positioned to look after these services for families in our community. Events in the community and online are occurring throughout 2023 to inform citizens and gather feedback and everyone will be invited to vote on our Law.



We wish to end the practice of child removals

In the past three years, Lalum’utul’ Smun’eem supported the return of 33 children to their families, and since October 2021, no children have been removed by the agency.

About our Cowichan Law



“The emphasis is to move away from children being removed from their family and being removed from community; this law is going to make it very difficult to do that.”

– *Tl'ul'thut*
Robert Morales



“It’s my hope that our community members will feel the difference and see the difference in the way we work with our community, respectfully walking alongside our families.”

– *Suleen tun'eet*
Addie Price

Our Child and Family Wellness Legislation (Law) is grounded in our *snuw'uy'ulh* (teachings) and the belief that youth, Elders and families should have the supports they need and the right to guide decisions that impact them. The law has four main components.

Jurisdiction and governance

Our Law will apply to all Cowichan children who are citizens of our nation. The Service Delivery Area will initially cover Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Cowichan Tribes Chief and Council is the Governing Body, however, they will not become involved nor interfere in case management decisions. A Board of Directors will be established to oversee our *Lalum'utul'* *Smun'eem* Child and Family Services agency.

Guiding principles and standards

Decisions about children are based on the best interests of the child, which recognizes the importance of identity, culture, language, and connections to family and land. Our core teachings like *nuts'amaat shqwaluwun* (One Heart, One Mind) and values such as *nu stl'i ch* (love) and *si'emstuhw* (respect) are woven into the Law. Guiding principles flow from our belief that it is the responsibility of all Cowichan Tribes citizens to look after the wellbeing of all of our children.

Prevention and support services

Our Law states that Child and Family Services must prioritize prevention. This means that a holistic, family-centred model will provide supports to families in need and ensure that poor housing and poverty are never grounds to separate families. Our Law will allow us to develop our own policies and practice standards and we will hire and train workers to deliver these prevention services in a culturally safe way.

Protection and intervention services

As a last resort, our Law outlines how social workers can work with families and the legal system to protect children who are at risk of harm. Provincial courts will be utilized to implement our Law as we develop alternative dispute resolution options. In case of disagreement between Canadian or BC Law and Cowichan Law, our Law will prevail.

A full copy of our draft Law can be found at:
ourchildlaw.cowichantribes.com/law

RECLAIMING JURISDICTION: a long time coming

| PRE-CONTACT | 1831-1996 | 1993-1996 | 2012-2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| Our snuw'uy'ulh guide how we raise our children and families | Sixties Scoop and Residential Schools cause devastating impacts | Creation of new delegated agency Lalum'utul' Smun'eem | Community engagement begins around Cowichan Child & Family Law | Bill C-92 passes; Cowichan Tribes gives notice of intent to exercise jurisdiction | Cowichan Tribes Child and Family Wellness Project Team established | Coordination agreement, law and service delivery model developed |

OUR PATH FORWARD* 2023

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| February - June Focused discussions with families, Elders and youth | January - May Drafting of Coordination Agreement with Canada/Province | July - August Review and finalization of Agreement and Law | October - December Voting on Law and signing of Coordination Agreement |
|---|---|--|--|

2024

Transition authority from province to Cowichan Tribes;
Implementation of Law

YOUR ROLE IN CHANGE

Citizens will be called to vote on the law in late 2023. If the community votes in favour of our Law, it will gradually come into effect in early 2024.



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When youth talk to an adult
They should listen
So youth know they care
Maybe no one helps them
They probably just stare
Ask them, what can I do to help?
So they know you're there
For when something
Feels like it's missing
Maybe all we need is an adult
To listen when it's a hard time
We look to you to talk
So we can feel fine
Maybe we have depression
That builds up to aggression
We feel conflicted
So we talk to an adult
So we don't turn
To things that are addictive
When you listen to us
We don't feel last
We don't have to think
About our past
So please just listen
So we don't feel like
We're missing
Cuz good people makes us
Feel protected
Look at it from our perspective
You don't have to feel sympathy
Or you don't have to feel empathy
We don't talk cuz of our doubts
That's why we suffer when
We feel down and out



**I feel safe
and cared
for when ...**

I live in a
nice home

my parent
teaches
me math

I have
lots of
food
to eat

my
parents
give me
lots
of hugs

everyone
puts
up with me
when I'm
grumpy

my parent
makes **my**
favourite
things
to eat

my parent **teaches** me
to eat the **right foods**
so I grow up healthy

when my
parents
drive me
to **fun**
activities

everyone
keeps me
fit and in
good
shape

Find these Hul'q'umi'num' words

Words in Hul'q'umi'num' in the word search are included without their usual spacing, dashes or apostrophes. Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| HUY CH Q'U (thank you) | LELUM (house) |
| SMUN'EEM (children) | LULUMEXUN (guardian) |
| S-UL'HWEEN (Elder) | HULITHUT (come to life) |
| HA'PUT (deer) | SHUYULH (older brother/sister/cousin) |
| TSELISH (hand) | QEQ (baby) |
| HUL'Q'UMI'NUM' (language of Quw'utsun peoples) | STIWUN (niece/nephew/cousin's child) |
| | HWYUNUMUS (smile) |
| | YUXWULE' (eagle) |

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B N J P H W Y U N U M U S R D
J H F P B J S A W L T Q V C A
V G C M M H K E X D Q H U G P
O I H M U E W S B R S C B R H
Z B S Y C G U Z L L O Y B S U
M F U C H L N U X E M U L U L
V L F H H S Z D Q K K H V D Q
H W P W S T H U L I T H U T U
V X E V L I Y U X W U L E G M
P E G E B W U S T Y M N R F I
N U K E C U H M Q L M Y H L N
K P O H I N K H E T Y U P E U
M E E N U M S D Q F X U L X M
H A P U T V V W E K V J O E X
B O M V H S I L E S T O D H L
  
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Answer key:
last page





Project logo

Quw'utsun artist Charlene Johnny

I grew up in foster care and now live in East Vancouver. The logo I created features the circle of life. The flower petals represent our growing children. As our S-ul'hween (Elders) have taught us, our children are our flowers. Each petal represents one of the seven Quw'utsun villages. In nature, we are surrounded by sacred geometry. The connection is no coincidence and parallels the sacredness of raising our children. As our young ones grow in our territory, we cultivate the values of the land and our beliefs. The hands at the bottom represent Quw'utsun hwulmuhw (First Nation person) upholding and protecting our children and our inherent right to care for them. The colours combine our powerful black and red with soft tan that embodies the softness of cedar.

charlenejohnny.com



Quw'utsun conversations

Listen to community videos sharing perspectives about this important project



Scan QR code with your phone (or iPad), or visit the link below to watch dozens of community member videos.
vimeo.com/showcase/10351352





Kids table at community BBQ (Aug 2022)



Chief Hwitsum at community BBQ (Aug 2022)



Learning from Elders



Project table at Cowichan Tribes Open House (May 2022)



Community presentation (March 2023)



Witness at community BBQ



Community drop-in event (March 2023)

A law for community, by community

Under the direction of Chief & Council, we have held many events over the past several years to discuss this work with community. We gathered online, at community events, and monthly meetings; listening to the voices of our community to develop our own Child and Family Law.

STAY INVOLVED

We will continue to meet regularly with community to answer questions and collect feedback. Look out for upcoming events, including zoom sessions, community BBQs, and off-reserve events in Nanaimo and Victoria. We look forward to seeing you and hearing what you have to say.



WORD SEARCH ANSWER KEY

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | N | J | P | H | W | Y | U | N | U | M | U | S | R | D |
| J | H | F | P | B | J | S | A | W | L | T | Q | V | C | A |
| V | G | C | M | M | H | K | E | X | D | Q | H | U | G | P |
| O | I | H | M | U | E | W | S | B | R | S | C | B | R | H |
| Z | B | S | Y | C | G | U | Z | L | L | O | Y | B | S | U |
| M | F | U | C | H | L | N | U | X | E | M | U | L | U | L |
| V | L | F | H | H | S | Z | D | Q | K | K | H | V | D | Q |
| H | W | P | W | S | T | H | U | L | I | T | H | U | T | U |
| V | X | E | V | L | I | Y | U | X | W | U | L | E | G | M |
| P | E | G | E | B | W | U | S | T | Y | M | N | R | F | I |
| N | U | K | E | C | U | H | M | Q | L | M | Y | H | L | N |
| K | P | O | H | I | N | K | H | E | T | Y | U | P | E | U |
| M | E | E | N | U | M | S | D | Q | F | X | U | L | X | M |
| H | A | P | U | T | V | V | W | E | K | V | J | O | E | X |
| B | O | M | V | H | S | I | L | E | S | T | O | D | H | L |



Cowichan Tribes

Questions or suggestions about the process or our law?

Visit us ourchildlaw.cowichantribes.com

Email us ourchildlaw@cowichantribes.com

Updates in Quw'utsun monthly newsletter

