

# SQUAMISH TRADITIONAL LAWS: Our Children, Our Future, Our Vision



## STEVE KOZEY JURISDICTIONAL LAW PROJECT LEAD

Steve Kozey is known to many Nation families as the original Facilitator-Coordinator of the Ayás Méhmen (AMM) Nexwniwnitway Family Circle Program. As a Social Justice Facilitator-Educator and lifelong learner Steve has earned several master's degrees in Social Work, Community and Regional Planning, and Adult Education at UBC. In 2012 he completed doctoral level studies

He refers to his practice as one of 'cultural humility' "where I try to keep my eyes open to learning more, to gain a deeper understanding, and appreciation of the Squamish people that I am engaged with". When not at work Steve and his wife enjoy family visits with their children and grandchildren travelling across BC and Alberta enjoying the beauty of nature's sites.

## CONTACT

**PHONE:** 604-985-4111

**EMAIL:**

[Steve.kozey@squamish.net](mailto:Steve.kozey@squamish.net)

## WHAT IS BILL C-92?

On January 1, 2020 a Federal statute of Canada called the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children, youth and families* came into force. This means that Indigenous groups across Canada who chose to do so can proceed to design and deliver child and family solutions that best suit their needs.

Since the beginning of colonial influence and decimation of Indigenous occupied land, language, culture, and ways of life; through impacts such as residential schools, the 60's scoop, and ongoing marginalization, the result has been a loss of local jurisdiction to support and serve our own people. This new Act affords an 'opportunity' to return to respect and dignity as to how we support, guide and deliver services to our children, youth and families.

## Some examples of the benefits to the Squamish Nation in planning and designing our own services under our own laws would be:

- Nation law could re-design and extend current services delivered by Ayás Méhmen (AMM) to all members wherever they reside in Canada.
- Tripartite Agreements completed with ISC and BC would include funding arrangements.
- 'Best interests of a child' would be interpreted as in a manner compatible with a provision of a Squamish law.
- A child's connection to family would always be enforced. Traditional and current Nation ceremonial practices would be re-introduced. All elements of a newly designed program would be centered on local Squamish knowledge and worldview.

## PHASES: WHAT'S NEXT?

**Phase 1:** Research and data collection from focus groups, members who have experienced foster care, Elders, Nation Social Workers, Hereditary Chiefs and Elected Council members, youth, families and so on. Your feedback will help to determine if the Nation will move forward in implementing positive changes to programs that are currently delivered.

**Phase 2:** If the communication from membership (in Phase 1) suggests that we move forward, development of the laws would be the next phase of this work; the project team would respond by initiating the drafting of Nation Law that would guide services to our children, youth, and families.

**Phase 3:** Implementation would result in: how our service providers will relate to our families as they carry out their work.; a model of practice based on Squamish law (the Village support system) that would define and describe the resources necessary for ensuring safety and healing to our families.



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Ayás Méhmen  
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