



**Skwxwú7mesh  
Úxwumíxw**

Squamish Nation



# CHIYÁXW

CHILD AND FAMILY LAW  
PROJECT UPDATE NEWSLETTER

March 2026

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**Strong relations between our families, this is what kept our children within our families and the village**

– Quotes from Hereditary Chiefs

**Family is first in making decisions on child safety, listening is necessary, staff need to sit back, keep quiet and hear the family**

– Quotes from Family Focus Meetings

## 1 ABOUT THE PROJECT

### Introduction

- The Nation is developing our own law, called Chiyáxw, that will describe how we care for, support, and serve our Nation children, youth and families.
- The law will respect our Squamish culture, family values, and teachings.
- A draft of the law will be available for People’s review and feedback.
- Within one year, a vote will be held for the People to approve the law.
- In March of 2025 we completed three years of feedback from: Hereditary Chiefs and their families, families at Nexwniwitway Famil                      ow we can best support our families with child and youth development in a respectful Squamish way.
- Our law (Chiyáxw) will include Squamish cultural ways of working to support children and families like we did before the Government violated our rights 157 years ago.

This newsletter gives us the following:

- An overview of the work we have done to date and the work that is still ahead
- A description of the cultural changes that will be made in work with our families that will offer respectful support and services that children and youth will benefit from

**Chiyáxw** is a Squamish word that refers to protocols, ways of being, and respectful ways of conducting oneself. Many interpret Chiyaxw as a law – “a correct way of going about doing a task or caring for our children” for example.

# 2 BACKGROUND & PROCESS

## Project Timeline


**Year 1**  
(April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023)  
– Our advisory groups were formed, and through interviews and engagement with our members we learned about our Nation’s pre-colonial Childcare practices. Recommendations for change started to emerge.

**Year 2**  
(April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024)  
– Listening to stories of trauma and emotional harm, we identified recommendations calling for change to the Child and Family Service system, based on a foundation of Squamish history, knowledge and culture.


**Year 3**  
(April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025) – Through Advisory Group meetings, we added detail to the Advisory recommendations; we analysed and envisioned how the project changes could be implemented.

## Our Community-Driven Process


In April 2021 we conducted a survey




Over **80%** of respondents favoured moving to Nation Law for delivering services to children and families




During this **3** year period,



we have had over **230** meetings



and consulted with over **2,000** of our members.



“The central focus will be that the families are the ones to determine what is fair for their children. We will not use the legal system outside of the community...it is incompatible with our Squamish ways. Chiyaxw is needed for the community”

– Quotes from the Chiyaxw Community Advisory Group

“Our Child and Family law must be based on a foundation of Squamish history, knowledge and culture”

– Quotes from the Chiyaxw Community Advisory Group



Scan the QR code for videos of our Advisory Group members sharing their thoughts on the Chiyáxw project and what it means to them.



# 2 BACKGROUND & PROCESS

## Chiyáxw Team: Advisory Groups

**Chiyáxw Advisory Group** (7 members)

Focus on recommending changes to CFS law and service based on harms and trauma caused by Residential Schools, the Government’s 60’s Scoop and continuing CFS policies.

**Chairperson:** Spelexilh - Angie Dawson  
**Co-Chair:** Lenore Baker  
**Member:** Thlee kul wit- Monica Jacobs  
**Member:** Kitakehtn - Glen Newman  
**Member:** Khal tin aat - Evelyn Lamont  
**Member:** Uxwaluu’t - Jessica Natraoro  
**Member:** Lixuhlwet - Lorna Joseph

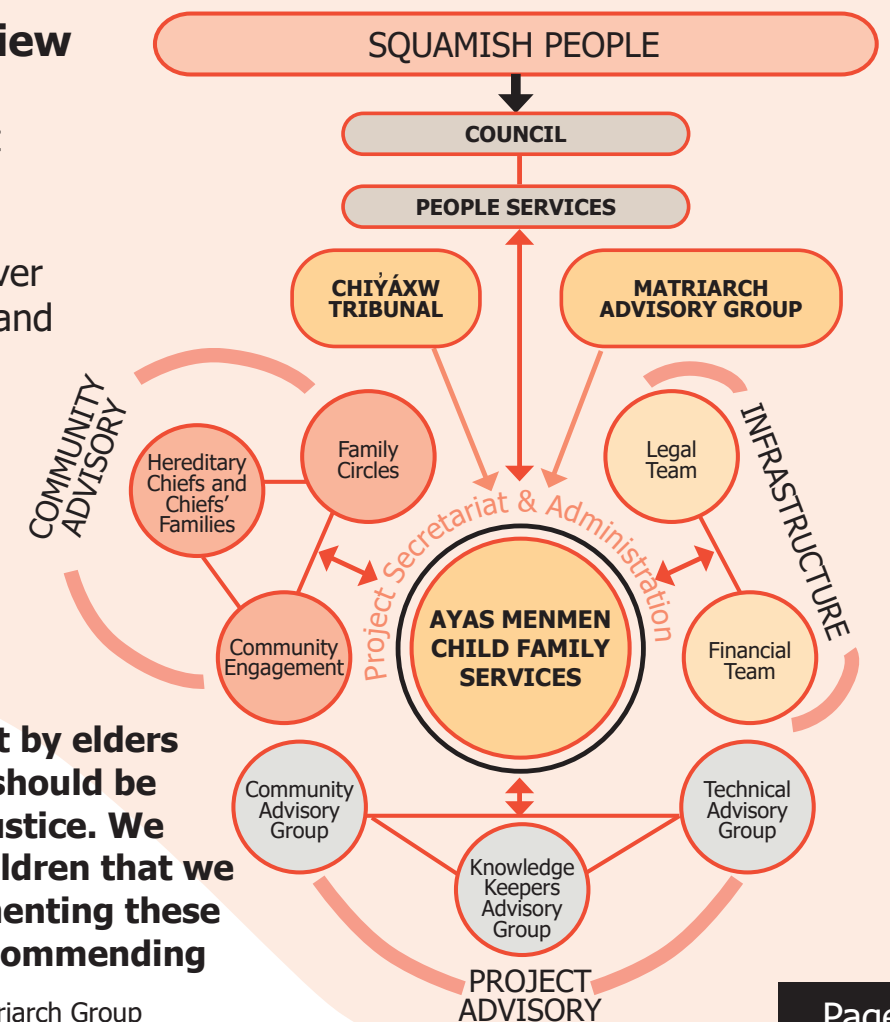
**Knowledge Keepers Advisory Group** (10 members)

Focus on recommending childcare practices based on Squamish history, values, and protocol that have supported Squamish childcare practices in the pre-colonial period prior to government intrusion.

**Chairperson:** Skawshkint - Diane Natrall  
**Co-Chair:** St’alalut - Orene Johnston  
**Member:** Paitsmauk - David Jacobs  
**Member:** Sla’wyla - Andrea Jacobs  
**Member:** Tiaoutenaat - Jackie Williams  
**Member:** Chap7lana - Henry Williams  
**Member:** Kelkach - Kanani Nahanee  
**Member:** Kwaltanaat - Kathy Nahanee  
**Member:** Nekwsaliya - Linda George  
**Member:** Sisolia - Donna Billy

## Chiyáxw Team: Overview

The diagram to the right shows how the technical and advisory groups are working together to deliver our community-centred and community-led project.

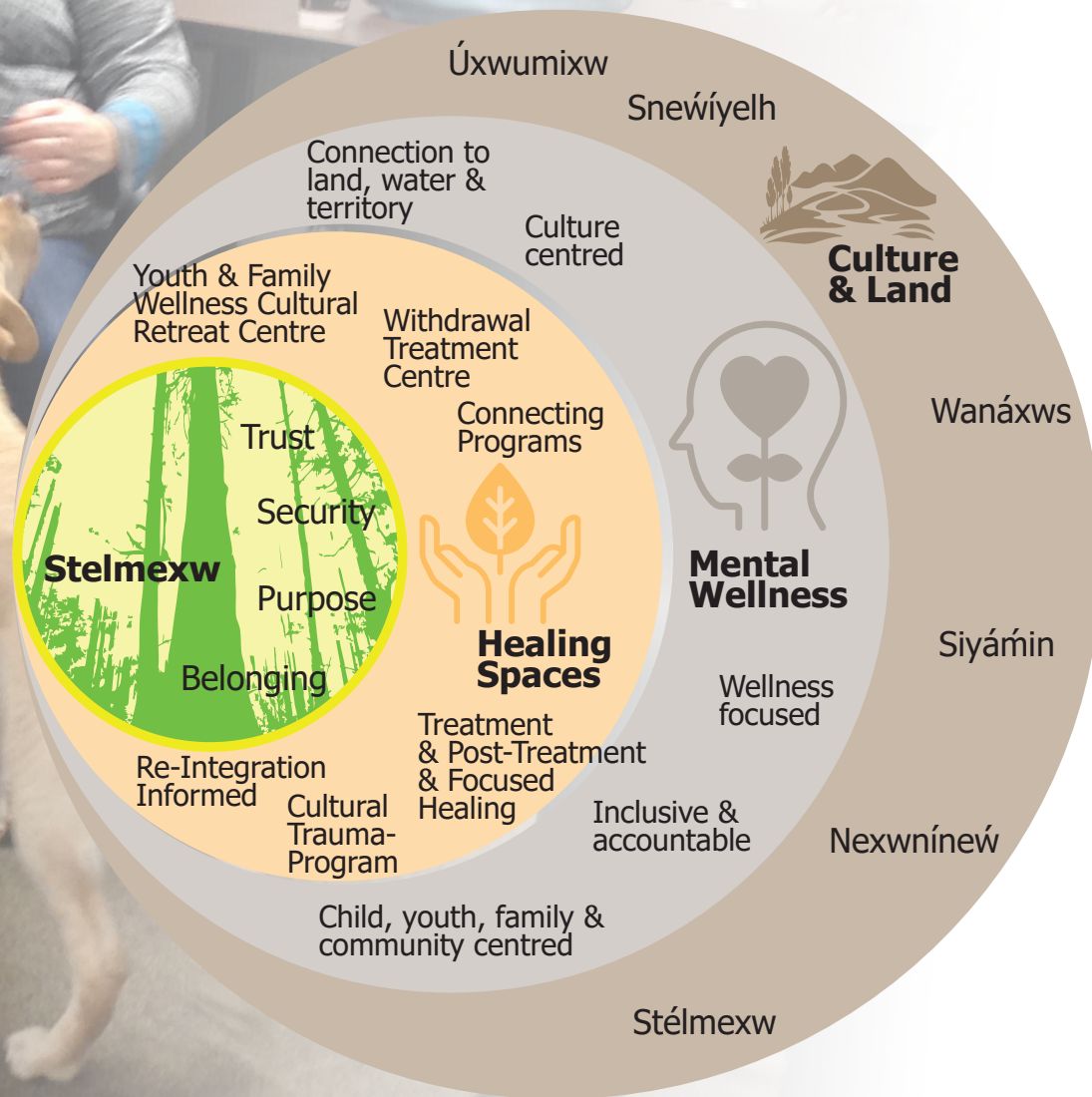


“We have been taught by elders that really what we should be achieving is loving justice. We need to show the children that we love them by implementing these things that we’re recommending”

– Quotes from the Matriarch Group

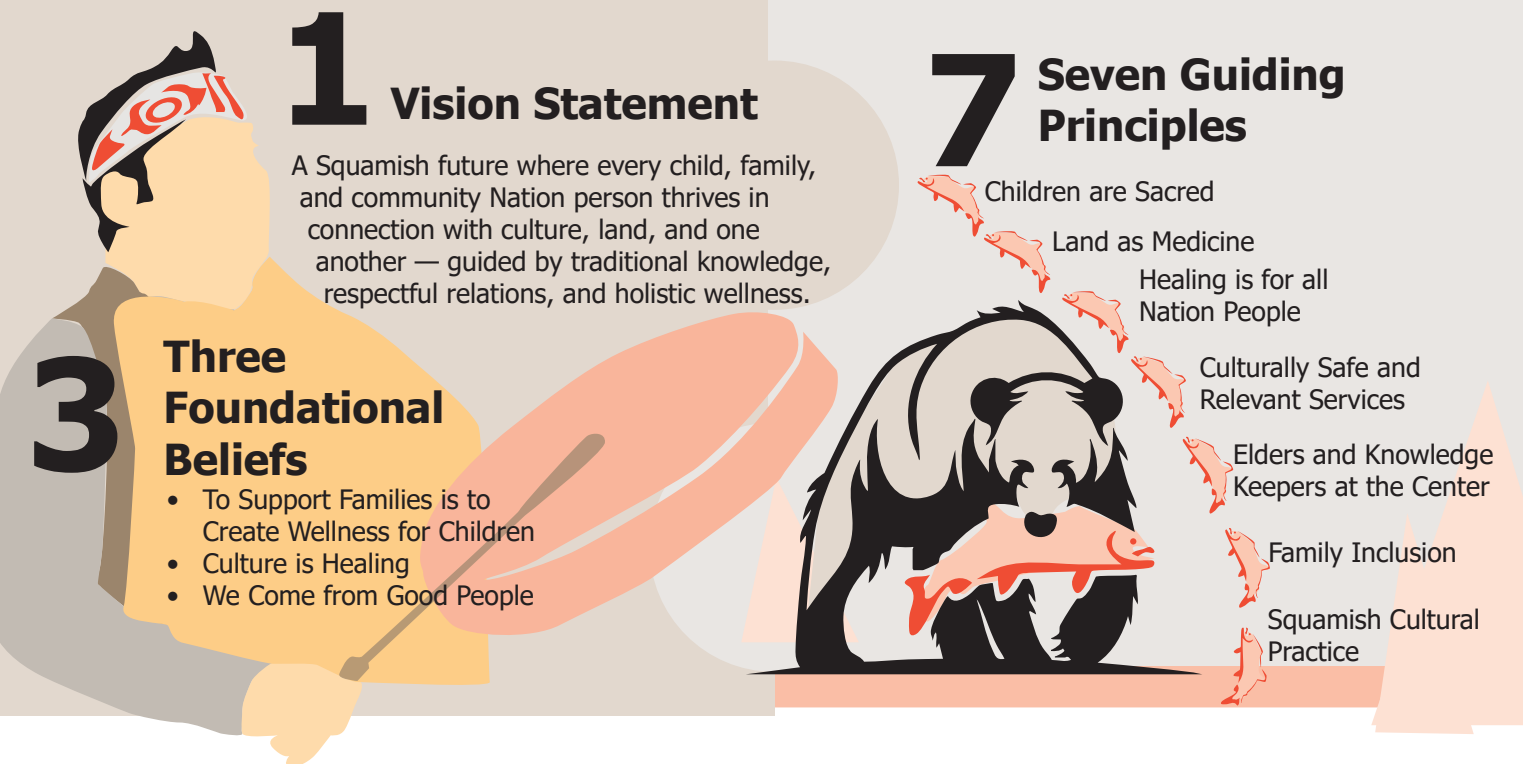
## Skw̓xwú7mesh Family Centred Wellness & Practice

The Skw̓xwú7mesh wellness framework shown here is based on Squamish values: trust, security, purpose and belonging. It guides our project delivery, making sure it reflects the heart-centred values of our people.



## Our Practice Framework

In addition to the Wellness Framework, this Practice Framework guides how we practice, relate, and work with our families which is directly linked to the outcomes expected for the people we serve. Our framework **helps us interrupt the cycle of colonization, ensures consistency in our policies and ethics, and makes us iyim** (strong).



**Parents are never to lose rights to their children, and they must always be supported with Chiyaxw services for as long as needed**

– Quotes from the Chiyaxw Community Advisory Group



## One Call to Action

**“To support a child, we must support their family. To support the family, we must return to the land, the language, and the teachings. This is our Squamish way.”**

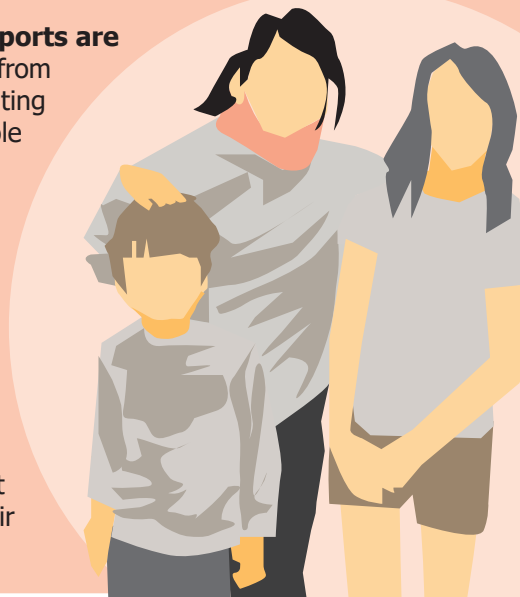
## The Changes We are Already Making

Based on the Skwxwu7mesh Wellness model of how we work with Nation families, the Advisory Group has recommended:

**Chiyaxw will be based on Skwxwu7mesh cultural practices and values:** Past and current Child and Family Services Laws do not recognize our cultural uniqueness as Squamish Peoples. Our new Law (Chiyaxw) will define how we will work with our families and support children and youth based on our Skwxwu7mesh ways of knowing and being.

**Mandatory and on-going staff training:** Mandatory Skwxwu7mesh cultural training for all staff will be expanded to focus on responding to the impacts of generational trauma, mental health, substance abuse, understanding healing, and upgrading the skills for applying healing support services.

**Changing how child safety supports are delivered.** Staff roles will change from a past and current role of investigating and assessing parental care to a role of facilitating supportive service relationships with parents and family. The focus will be on building relations with parents and family so that they continue to remain in the lead role to care for the child and that the care provided is in the child's "best interest". Support services will aim to help create a healthy family and community environment so that each child can thrive to their fullest potential.



**Bringing child decision-making back to Nation families:** The families of each child will make childcare decisions as needed, along with the input of Elders, and Knowledge Keepers who will provide traditional cultural and healing teachings to program staff.

**A Nation Matriarch Group** will review and make final childcare case decisions when needed, to ensure that the best interests of a child or youth, are always respected and protected.



**We need to do a lot of healing to get back to how supportive family life used to be in pre-contact. There is so much healing and teaching that needs to happen for all to understand how powerful that was and can still be as part of Chiyaxw**

– Quotes from the Chiyaxw Knowledge Keepers Advisory Group



**Family circles bring family together and it needs to be possible for all interested family to be present**

– Quotes from a Chiyaxw Youth Survey and Youth Meetings



**In our family, law was respect, support, communication, honesty, trust, loyalty, humility, and love**

– Quotes from Family Focus Meetings



**We must have a Healing Center in the community with qualified Indigenous healing trainers that can offer the following: trauma, anger management, family violence services on a regular basis where it is open daily and evenings and workshops are scheduled to accommodate multiple family and staff needs.**



– Quotes from the Chiyaxw Community Advisory Group

# 4 NEXT STEPS

**Our next steps to finalize and implement our Chiyáxw (Nation Law) include:**



Preparing a draft of Chiyáxw (the law). The current timeline for completion is August 31, 2026.



Defining the implementation requirements



On completion, the package will be submitted to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for funding



## Ways to Give Us Your Voice

There is still time to add your voice to help shape a Child and Family law (Chiyáxw) that is designed by our People and will always be respectful of all our Nation children, youth, and families.

To provide your ideas for change or to hear about the Chiyáxw changes coming soon, contact one of the Advisory Group members listed on page 2 of this newsletter, or choose one of the following options:

- 1 – Talk individually to a Project Coordinator** by calling 604-985-4111
- 2 – E-mail your recommendations for change** to [chiyaxw@squamish.net](mailto:chiyaxw@squamish.net)
- 3 – Request a Family Meeting:** Meetings are held at the Board Room at 380 Welch Street in West Vancouver and at Totem Hall in Squamish.
  - Meetings are usually two hours long and a meal is shared and provided by the project.
  - Meetings can be held during work hours, or between 6 and 8pm in the evenings.
  - The best size for meetings is 6-10 people.

## Stay connected!



**Website:** [squamish.net/chiyaxw](http://squamish.net/chiyaxw)

**Phone:** (604) 985-4111

**Email:** [Chiyaxw@squamish.net](mailto:Chiyaxw@squamish.net)

**Video Links**

