
TILLICUM LELUM ABORIGINAL
FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

Land Acknowledgment

“Tillicum Lelum respectfully acknowledges that we are gathered on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory xʷməθkʷəy̓əm of the (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Coast Salish Nations.

Culture Sustains the Nations

Tillicum Lelum Leadership

President TLAFC Board of Directors: Leona Gallant Metis Elder Matriarch

Executive Director: Grace Elliott-Nielsen OBC PhD Stz'uminus Elder Matriarch

Associate Director: Inga Nielsen-Cooper MBA AR Stz'uminus Matriarch

Sxwutculi Lelum (Hummingbird House)

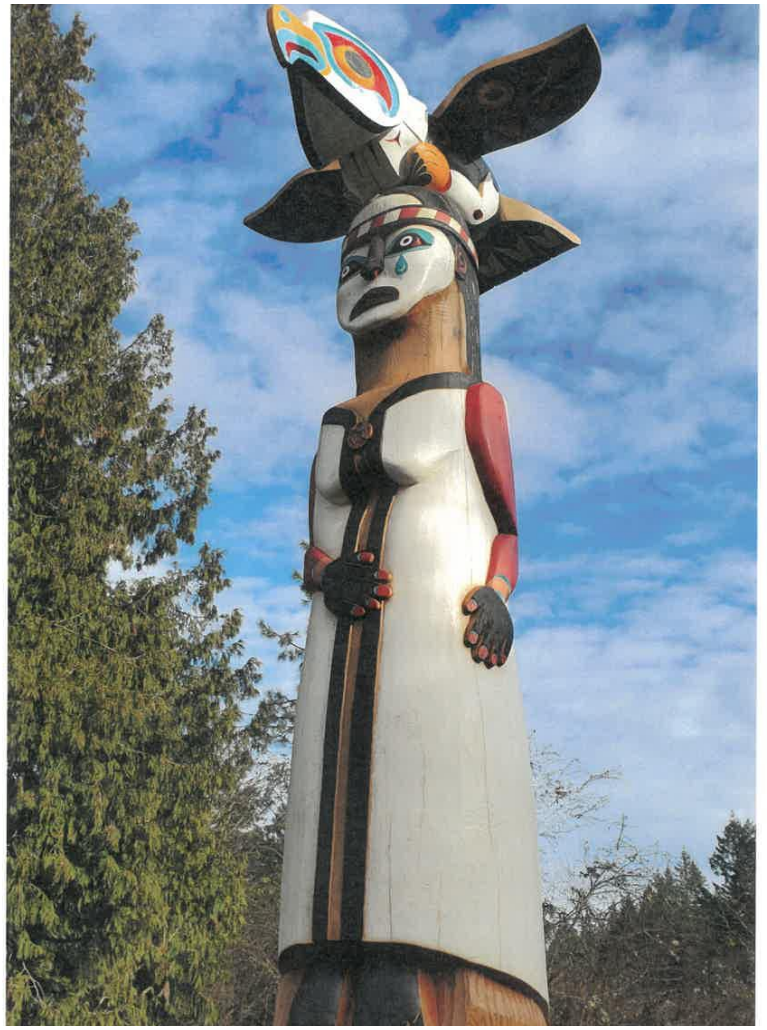
Blanketing our Lifegivers: An Act of Primary Prevention and Resistance to Reclaim All Our Nations Children

A Two Eyed Seeing ‘For Indigenous By Indigenous’ NICHI story: Building Housing Capacity for the next 7 Generations

Tillicum Lelum
Honor Pole

‘A Nation is not conquered until its women’s hearts are on the ground.’

(Cheyanne Teaching)



Housing insecurity and homelessness are among the most important drivers of the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

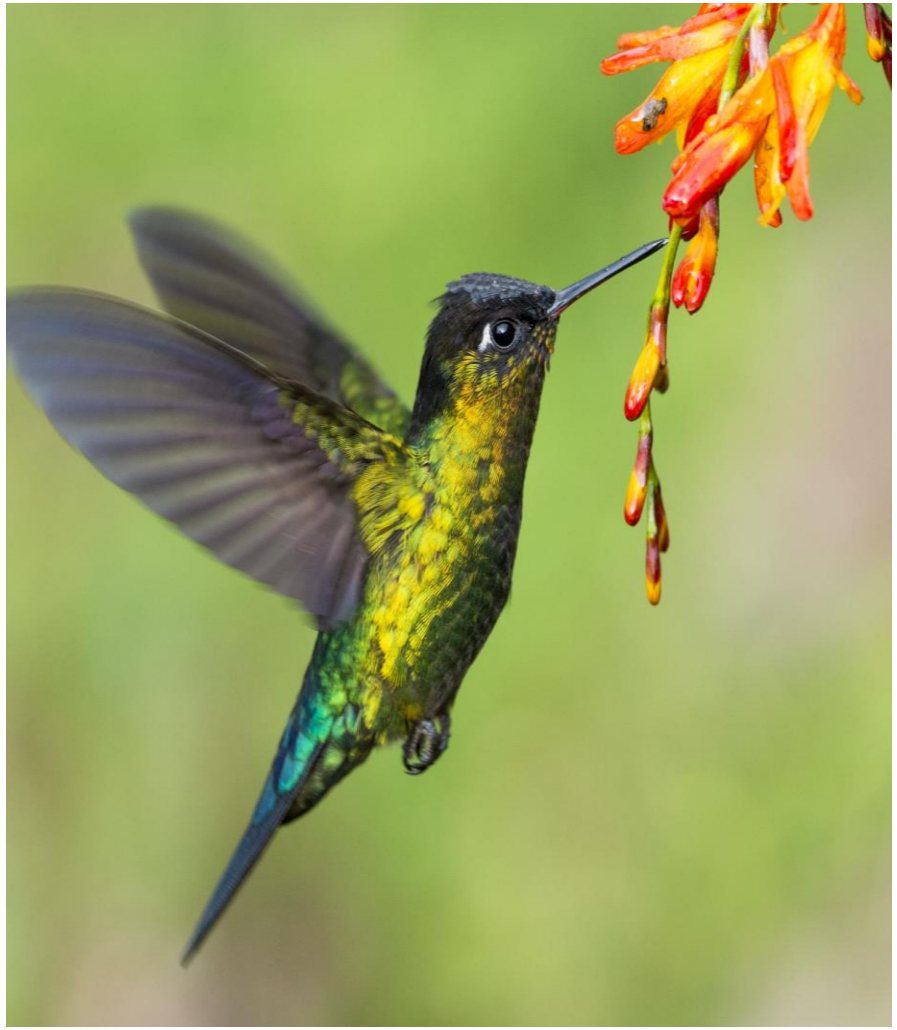
(Federal Housing Advocate's 2024–2025 Report to the Minister)

Intersectional Lens

- **An intersectional lens exposes patterns of structural violence and discrimination often hidden or overlooked" in institutions and systems at all levels of policy in Canada. (2024 Intersectional Lens is Key to Addressing Systemic Racism)**

- **Rodrigues, et al, observed, "women in her study experienced structural violence in the housing market, from child protective services, and in the homeless-serving system, all of which are intersecting and interconnected." (Developing Gendered and Culturally Safe Interventions for Urban Indigenous Families Experiencing Homelessness 2020).**

Hummingbird



Messenger of joy, intelligence, beauty, devotion, and love.

Respected for being fierce fighters and protectors of their territory.

This project mirrors those qualities: love, resilience, and security for families.

VISION

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS YOUNG MOTHERS THROUGH SAFE, CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE HOUSING:

SXWUTCULI LELUM

SUPPORT MODEL PROJECT

Key Desired Outcome

Primary Prevention residential homing of the first order, intricately woven into an Intergenerational Blanket of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being emphasizing Traditional Teachings and Care for our Life Givers.'

Addresses Indigenous child apprehension reflecting systemic racism in Colonist assessments that unfairly judge young moms' child-rearing knowledge and skills, exacerbated by 'Precarious Housing' circumstances.

“Homelessness crisis continues to worsen for women and gender-diverse people in ways that are distinct and disproportionate.”

National Indigenous Housing Network (2024)

Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network

Canadian Center for Housing Rights

The National Right to Housing Network

“Housing insecurity critical issue impacting Indigenous women, girls, and gender diverse peoples.” (Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement- Final Report to Indigenous Services Canada NWAC **2019**)

Most “Indigenous households in core housing need are female-led.” (Canada Housing Renewal Association Indigenous Caucus **2020**)

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1 in 10 Indigenous youth have children

46.4 % of young Indigenous lone parents are women

Traumatic reality of ‘precarious housing’ put young urban low income Indigenous lone-parent moms at risk of homelessness and child apprehension.

“Research evidence’s First Nations children are still being removed at astonishing rates because of neglect. When I talk about neglect, I mean poverty, poor housing, and substance misuse related to the residential school trauma.” (A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada Dr. Cindy Blackstock 2020)

“Indigenous child protection cas*e*s in Canada often reflect Eurocentric child protection policy and decision framing biased against Indigenous families.” (Sustaining cultural Genocide Roy Bear Chief et a 2019)

52.2% of children in foster care were Indigenous, although accounting for only 7.7% of the country's child population." (**Canada Census 2016**)

"**53.8% of children in foster care were Indigenou**s, although accounting for only 7.7% of the country's child population." (**Canada Census 2021**)

Call For Justice 12.4

We call upon all governments to prohibit the apprehension of children on the basis of poverty and cultural bias. All governments must resolve issues of poverty, inadequate and substandard housing, and lack of financial support for families, and increase food security to ensure that Indigenous families can succeed. (Calls for Justice MMWIG Final Report 2019).

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

“1. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care by providing adequate resources enabling Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.” (2015)

THE ROLE OF ELDERS & KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Our Elders remind us of the importance of our **connection to our "old ones"** throughout our lives. From infancy to adulthood, **Elders hold a special role in providing guidance and sharing teachings that keep us well**. We can look to the Elders within our families and communities to learn how to keep ourselves and our children physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally well.

“Spirituality must be at the core of your work. The spirits have the strength to meet the forces that will resist you. The Spirits have the strength to support you in the work you must do.” (From the Elders)

Siem Qulmuhw Mustimuxw Tze Tzu Wut Tu Mamu'na’tzt

(Teaching from Qxi-qwuy-ul-tu-nauut -Elder Marguerit James)

This hul’q’umi’num phrase means **"Honoured Indigenous People, Helping Our Children."** The phrase reminds us of our shared responsibility to care for all of the children within our community.

This is an important reminder that **all children are sacred**. We have a responsibility to take care of one another and keep our families and communities well.

THE WELLNESS OF OUR CHILDREN IS CONNECTED TO WELLNESS OF OUR COMMUNITY

Children are and at the heart of our community. Elders and Knowledge Keepers remind us of the teaching that **each child is a gift**, and that we all have a responsibility and role in supporting their wellness.

When we come together as a community to support one another, share our cultures and ceremonies, and lift each other up, we are able to take care of ourselves as parents so that we can, in turn, take care of our children.

Sxwutculi Lelum restores our Matriarchs rightful place as Elders supporting young mothers and staff with traditional teachings and cultural knowledge supports Indigenous expectant, new moms and existing young our ‘Lifegivers’ used to be surrounded with before contact and Colonialism.

Traditionally, **mothers**, **aunties** and **grandmothers** were the birthkeepers and midwives who took care of us during our pregnancies and after our babies were born.

The **matriarchs** in our communities carry the teachings, medicines, and ceremonies around pregnancy and birth to support our families during the birthing process and beyond.

Lifegiver Story 1

“I needed to be in safe housing where I had my own space so I could get more visits with my children.”

Story 1 Outcome: Reclaiming Our Children

“Mother of a 6-year-old daughter and 3-year-old twin boys moved into Young Mothers House (YMH) in February 2022.

At the time of moving in, I was newly sober and had limited supervised access to my children, who lived with their fathers.

“I needed to be in safe housing where I had my own space so I could get more visits with my children and have them returned to me.”

After I moved into YMH, I started to have more visits and even the odd overnight with my daughter. The Transition staff connected me to Partners in Parenting and enrolled me in counselling, which helped me to learn better ways to cope with my emotions and not use alcohol. I attended various groups through the organization and some in the community.

After completing Partners in Parenting and Triple P Parenting, I was granted a visitation schedule that was no longer supervised. I began to have my children regularly, which led me to full custody.

I eventually moved into independent housing, where I now share custody of my three children with their fathers.

Accepted outreach from Transition services and continue to be supported to this day. I enrolled in the responsible adult course through and obtained a full-time position working in a daycare.

Have since updated my schooling and am doing the ECE program through Pacific Rim. Having a place in the organizations Transition Housing helped me feel safe and supported to get back on my feet. My life has done a complete turnaround, and I will always be grateful for my time there and the continued support.”

Lifegiver Story 2

A young mother formerly living in a Tent City (a homeless encampment) during her high-risk pregnancy was not going to be able to retain custody of her newborn after birth without immediate Culturally Safe support.

Story 2 Outcome: Traditional Pre and Post-Natal Care Avoids Birth Alert Apprehension.

The young expectant mother living in the Tent City moved into Young Moms Transition House just before her due date.

Her son was born one week after moving in and she was able to keep him in her care.

Staff supported her in applying for Income Assistance and Child Tax Credit and followed up with a BC Housing application for housing, which she obtained a month following the birth of her child.

Now fully employed and successfully maintains custody of her son and her independent housing.

OCAP Informed: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession

- **Tillicum Lelum professional 'Framework for Practice' in all of our project design adheres to an Evidenced Indigenous Research approach of ' Cultural Authenticity and Cultural Safety', integrated with a Two-Eyed Seeing combination of quantitative and qualitative data methodologies.**
- **"Every data point included in our data collection about services delivered to our people (All My Relatives) - represents a strong, resilient First Nations individual who is a member of a family, community, and a proud Nation." (FNHA 2021 Sacred and Strong).**
- **It is a Two Eyed Seeing context of 'Story Telling' woven through the value laden but often unacknowledged dominant Colonial empirical notion of objective data and evidence.**

RESPECT FOR ALL OF OUR RELATIONS

There is a rich **diversity of cultures, teachings, and ceremonies** that exists within urban Indigenous communities. Our Elders remind us that this is a **strength.**

Sharing our knowledge and practices with one another allows us to draw on many different medicines, teachings, and ceremonies to stay well.

Elder Marguerit James

Coast Salish from Penelakut Tribe, and lives on Snuneymuxw territory.

She is a proud mother,grandmother, and great-grandmother.

Elder Marguerit provides Traditional cultural support for families through many programs at Tillicum Lelum.

This Elder loves being a part of the lives of new mothers and babies,

and does that work to “help the mothers by providing teachings and cultural guidance in their lives, so they can look after their children and babies in a good way.”

Qxi-qwuy-ul-tu-nauut

How I tell them is we are Coast Salish and if we go to your area and whatever ceremonies and cultural ways you do, we will follow it. Whatever you do in your area, we will do it.

To have respect for you, so while you come here to our area and you can do our cultural ceremonies our way…

We're not much different in our cultural ways and our ceremony.

Qxi-qwuy-ul-tu-nauut

Elder Wayne Johnny

Is Coast Salish from Snuneymuxw First Nation.

Elder Wayne's ancestral roots are connected to Snuneymuxw, Penelakut, Musqueam, Katzie, and Port Alberni Nations.

He has seven children, twenty-one grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

This Elder works within many programs at Tillicum Lelum, including facilitating men's wellness groups, Wellbriety groups, cultural groups at Nanaimo Correctional Centre, and with preschool age children at the Aboriginal HeadstartProgram.

Sul'si'mus'tun

They've come here and drummed and done their ceremonies here with us, the tobacco ceremony with us. And, and that's just the most beautiful thing. Because that's the same teachings they have as what we have. And that's to share.

So even the smudging... that doesn't come from us. It comes from back east. But it's shared, it's a shared practice for healing and in healing there's no wrong way so we can all share the healing practices.

There's no wrong way…It's healing. We're cleansing ourselves today. We're all cleansing together.

Sul'si'mus'tun

Elder Nora Fred

Elder Nora is Kwakwaka'wakw from 'Namgis First Nation.

She is a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother.

Elder Nora supports families through the Building Better Babies Program, Creating Healthy, Families Program, Walking with Elders Program, and the Aboriginal Headstart Program.

And in that way we're all together and no one's divided. They're all welcome, no matter where they come from, as our Elders call it, heshook-ish tsawalk, which means we are one, we are one and we are all interconnected.

Elder Norma

Metis Matriarch Elder Leona Gallant

President Tillicum Lelum BOD

Stz'uminus Matriarch Elder Grace Elliott-Nielsen

Tillicum Lelum Executive Director

Elder JC Lucas

Healer, Knowledge Keeper and Pipe Carrier Nuu-chah-nulth

Penelakut Matriarch Elder Marguerite James

BOD Elder

Inga Nielsen-Cooper Stz'uminus Matriarch

TL Associate Executive Director

Snuneymuxw Elder Wayne Johnny

Cultural Teachings Mentor

Honor Pole

(May 2022) Old growth red cedar log Totem pole commissioned by Tillicum Lelum to honor MMIWG. Carved by William Good and Joel Good of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

The matriarchal woman in the pole in a white swuqw'a'lh blanket represents our sii'em' slhunlheni', our respected women who are murdered and missing.

She has an Eagle design copper pin on her blanket representing wealth and royalty to honor matriarchs.

The Supernatural Eagle on the top of the pole with wings outstretched is to carry the women on their journey from earth into the heavens.