



## **LIL'WAT COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES STRATEGY**

### **Final Report**

#### **Background**

The underfunding of programs for children and families is an issue in First Nation communities across Canada. It is a direct result of federal policy. For example, funding for the Lil'wat Wellness Centre activities has remained fixed at about \$350,000 for more than 20 years. This lack of investment into communities leads to discrimination for First Nations children, youth and families receiving services from federally funded programs.

As a consequence of this discrimination, a complaint was brought to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Multiple times Canada was ordered to address the discrimination. Finally, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, the Assembly of First Nations, and Indigenous Services Canada negotiated a settlement. The settlement addresses historical underfunding and changes the funding formula going forward.

For Lil'wat, this means that the Community Social Services department will receive a one-time payment of \$7.3 million and an annual budget increase for Lil'wat Wellness Centre activities from around \$350,000 annually to approximately \$1.5 million annually. This new funding is an opportunity to make significant changes in the way the Community Social Services department supports Lil'wat children and families.

Funding must be used for:

- Lil'wat wellness programs, services, or staff;
- Providing culturally-appropriate prevention and well-being services for Lil'wat children and their families - to help families at-risk stay together in their communities; and,

- Supporting initiatives aimed at exercising greater control of child and family services.

As a result, a Community Social Services Strategy Project Leadership Committee was formed in the fall of 2021 to engage staff, Council and community on the priorities for new spending decisions.

What follows is the outcome of our work. We have developed a strategy for Community Social Services that outlines six strategic development priorities for making new spending decisions.

We hope that Council will approve this strategy so that new investments can be made in Community Social Services for the benefit of Lil'wat children and families.

On behalf of the Community Social Services Strategy Project Leadership Committee:

Chief Dean Nelson  
Chief Ashley Joseph  
Councillor Felicity Nelson  
Thelma Peters – Elder  
Debbie Alendal – Director Community Social Services  
Verna Stager – Education Director  
Kristin Hargitt – Team Lead/Social Worker  
Kerry Mehaffey - Chief Administrative Officer



## **LIL'WAT COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **Strategy**

#### **A. MISSION**

The mission of Lil'wat Community Social Services is to protect the rights of children, youth and families by ensuring their safety while maintaining their connection to family, culture, and community.

Húy'lhkalkh áma lhes húz'wit áma i stsmál'tkalha.

"Lil'wat people survival through our children."

#### **B. VALUES**

Love and compassion for our people

Hope and belief in positive change

Safety of our children

Ntákmen (Our Way)

Dedication to creating a better future

Appreciation for the unique experience, contribution and wisdom of each person

## **C. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

1. Expand Community Programs that Support the Wellbeing of Lil'wat Children and Families
2. Increase the Ability of Community Social Services to Deliver its Mission
3. Develop a Lil'wat Vision & Practice of Wellness
4. Increase Lil'wat Jurisdiction for the Protection of Lil'wat Children & Families
5. Decolonize Strategic Relationships
6. Improve Communication & Accountability

## **D. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (with examples)**

### **1. Expand Community Programs that Support the Wellbeing of Lil'wat Children and Families**

- More prevention programs – engage in holistic wellness discussions
- Address the outstanding social issues impacting families – lack of housing, food security, domestic violence, poverty – break the cycle
- Offer services to support victims
- Offer positive relationship training for couples and families
- Offer men's healing programs / women's healing programs
- Offer couples counselling
- Create transitional housing supports for children in care, youth transitioning out of MCFD care, etc.
- Link parents to employment and training supports
- Create a "Mother Den" type of program in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Families
- Create a navigator position to support people to access services/programs
- Develop opportunities for deep restorative practice (e.g. – programs for pedophiles and victims of pedophiles) by drawing on cultural precedent (e.g. – Wildman Story)
- More support and visits in the home
- Develop a way to provide staff coverage outside of regular office hours

## **2. Increase the Ability of Community Social Services To Deliver its Mission**

- Design a family development center that can be the focal point for Community Social Services programs and services
- Work with Capital Department to identify and develop land and services appropriate for a family development center
- Acquire new technology to support case management and train staff to implement the system
- Hire more staff to run new programs and support the core administrative needs of the department
- Develop a recruitment strategy that considers appropriate wages & benefits, educational placements, recognition of people with lived experiences, etc.
- Bring Human & Social Development courses and workshops to Ts'zil for staff and community
- Facilitate opportunities for staff to learn and grow together as a team
- Create a wellness strategy for staff that includes regular wellness opportunities and specific wellness interventions
- Develop agreements between Community Social Services department and schools of Human and Social Development to create learning opportunities, student placements, research projects, community -based conferences, etc.
- Work with Xetólacw Community School and Ts'zil to create interest and pathways to a career in Human and Social Services Development
- Create a protocol agreement with Lil'wat Housing department to give priority access to families identified by Community Social Services with urgent needs
- Work with Council to advocate for BC Housing funding to create targeted housing for high priority families identified by Community Social Services (transition homes / second stage housing)
- Visit and learn from the best practices of other First Nations
- Hire more counsellors for one-on-one counselling and group counselling

## **3. Develop a Lil'wat Vision & Practice of Wellness**

- Develop a holistic approach to wellness that permeates all departments
- Take an inventory of all Lil'wat programs – cradle to grave – to assess where there are gaps or duplication
- Create a Lil'wat theory of change and practice standards that moves away from loaded child welfare terms (decolonize the practice / use Ucwalmícwts)
- More community input on programs
- More connectivity across departments to address issues that fall through the gaps and reduce duplication
- Define the boundaries of the department

- Restructure the department/organization so that current staff are not spread too thin and will be able to concentrate on defined strategic goals and outcomes
- Consider ways to strengthen the capacity of the CSS team while still fostering collaboration across related program areas. For example, a “collaboration team” or an “executive director” position overseeing a larger portfolio.

#### **4. Increase Lil’wat Jurisdiction For the Protection of Lil’wat Children & Families**

- Utilize C-92 to build core capacity
- Investigate C-92 “*An Act Respecting First Nations and Métis Children, Youth, and Families*” to determine if it is an opportunity or threat and if the community will support it
- Develop our own First Nation court system through the avenue of restorative justice
- Create a negotiation table with BC and Canada to construct a new long-term predictable funding regime & program delivery agreement for Lil’wat Wellness
- Create a negotiation table to assess the possibility of justice reform
- First Nations court – local office in Pemberton, advocacy needed to implement a Native Court like in North Vancouver and New Westminister
- Create a program that encourages and supports more Lil’wat families to foster/adopt Lil’wat children

#### **5. Decolonize Strategic Relationships**

- Build on relationships to leverage Lil’wat objectives
- Develop a protocol to clarify the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Council, Councilors and the Community and Social Services department
- Create opportunities for leadership and staff to learn together about trauma-informed practice and other decolonizing methodologies
- Continue to foster a Council portfolio with strong representation for Lil’wat children and families
- Strengthen the working relationship with Ministry of Children and Families
- Decolonize relationships with other external agencies (e.g. - repatriate Sea-to-Sky Community Services aboriginal services contracts)
- Strengthen the working relationship with Tribal Police
- Strengthen the working relationships with other agencies that can address aspects of social issues in the community (e.g. - victim services, Community Living BC)
- Create opportunities for key partner organizations to learn about Lil’wat language, culture, and community.

## 6. Improve Communication & Accountability

- Acknowledge staff in the department
- Develop indicators and outcomes to measure progress
- Develop a communication campaign around healthy living messages for families and community (e.g. – seat-belt campaigns changed behaviors)
- More communication directly to Council, senior management, community
- Regularly share with the community (e.g. - via website or Facebook) stories, events, etc. that will create a better understanding about what the department does
- Help people to understand their process and/or relationships with MCFD and Nation
- More information to community about what supports are available to them
- Introduce all the workers and what they do

## E. LINKING CSS PRIORITIES TO THE LIL’WAT NATION STRATEGIC PLAN

CSS DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES	LIL’WAT NATION STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
1. Expand Community Programs that Support the Wellbeing of Lil’wat Children and Families	<i>Strong Families</i>
2. Increase the Ability of Community Social Services to Deliver its Mission	<i>Excellence in Lil’wat government</i>
3. Develop a Lil’wat Vision & Practice of Wellness	<i>People living in Ntákmén (Our Way)</i>
4. Increase Lil’wat Jurisdiction for the Protection of Lil’wat Children & Families	<i>Self-Determination for and by Lil’wat</i>
5. Decolonize Strategic Relationships	<i>Self-Determination for and by Lil’wat</i>
6. Improve Communication & Accountability	<i>Excellence in Lil’wat government</i>